

Aims & Principles

of the Anarchist Federation

1 The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2 Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3 We believe that fighting racism and sexism is as important as other aspects of the class struggle. Anarchist communism cannot be achieved while sexism and racism still exist. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class, women, lesbians and gays, and black people may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for them. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4 We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5 As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6 It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7 Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However, we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8 Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9 As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10 We oppose organised religion and religious belief(s).

ORGANISE!

... for revolutionary anarchism

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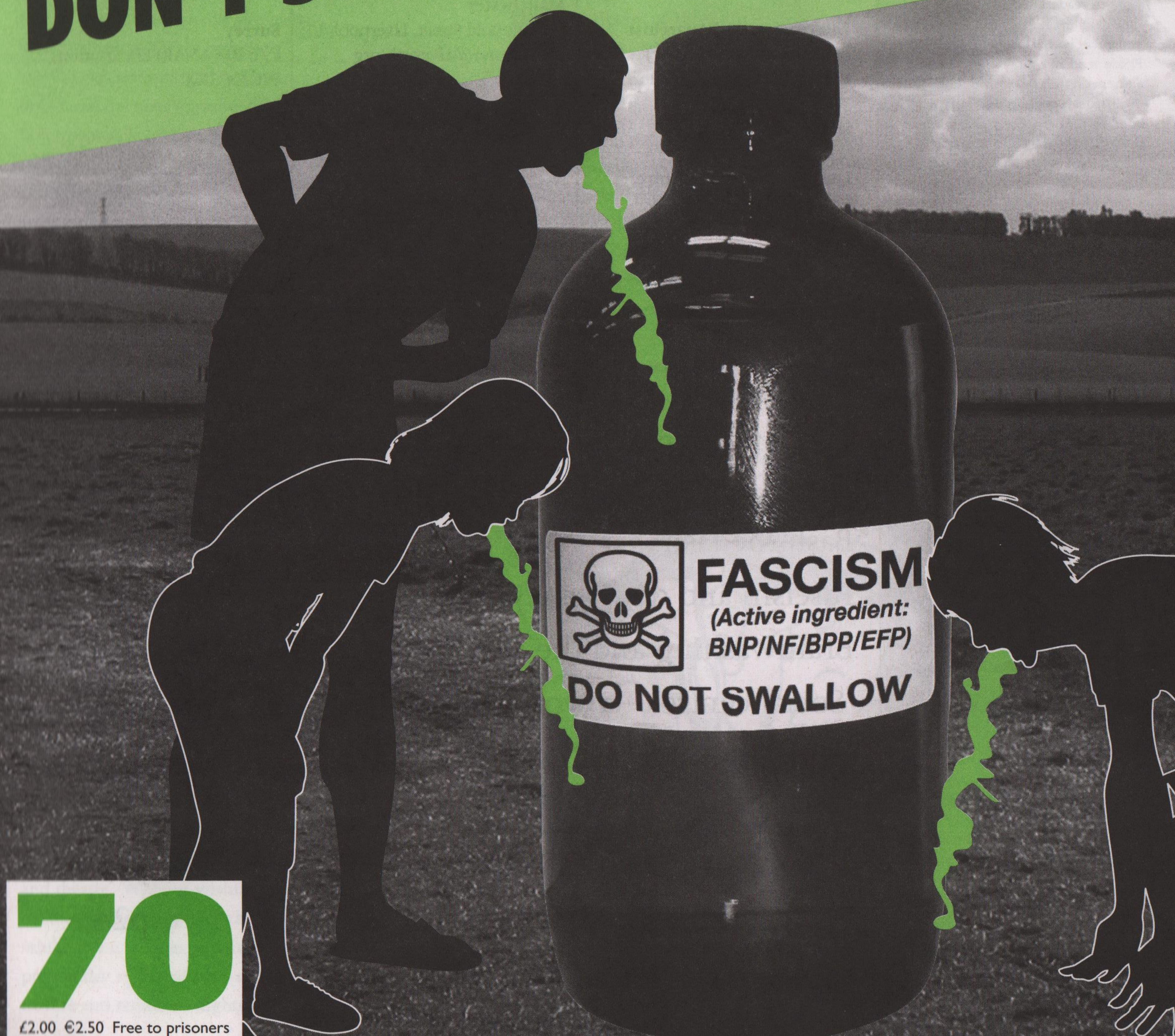
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Organise!

The magazine of the
Anarchist Federation
Issue 70—Summer 2008

Organise! is the magazine of the Anarchist Federation (AF). It is published in order to develop anarchist communist ideas.

It aims to provide a clear anarchist viewpoint on contemporary issues and to initiate debate on ideas not normally covered in agitational papers.

We aim to produce *Organise!* twice a year. To meet this target, we positively solicit contributions from our readers. We aim to print any article that furthers the objectives of anarchist communism. If you'd like to write something for us, but are unsure whether to do so, why not get in touch first? Even articles that are 100% in agreement with our aims and principles can leave much open to debate.

As always, the articles in this issue do not necessarily represent the collective viewpoint of the AF. We hope that their publication will produce responses from our readers and spur debate on.

The deadline for the next issue of *Organise!* will be **19th September 2008**.

Please send all contributions to the address on the right. It would help if all articles could be either typed or on disc. Alternatively, articles can be emailed to the editors directly at organise@afed.org.uk

What goes in *Organise!*

Organise! hopes to open up debate in many areas of life. As we have stated before, unless signed by the Anarchist Federation as a whole or by a local AF group, articles in *Organise!* reflect the views of the person who has written the article and nobody else.

If the contents of one of the articles in this issue provokes thought, makes you angry, compels a response then let us know. Revolutionary ideas develop from debate, they do not merely drop out of the air!

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£4.00/£8.00 (UK/non-UK) *Resistance* sub
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Joining the Anarchist Federation

Membership of the Anarchist Federation is open to all who agree with our aims and principles (found on the back cover). For more information write to: Anarchist Federation, BM ANARFED, London, WC1N 3XX

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Editorial –**Anarchism's anti-nationalist
& transnational imperative**

We present issue 70 of *Organise!* with an anti-fascist theme. This includes an analysis of the problem faced by anarchists aiming to fight fascism without falling into the trap of alliance with broad-based leftist and 'democratic' oppositions, followed by one on Antifa, the anarchist alternative to such alliances. Our approach to anti-fascism is important, not least because of the need to prevent the BNP's plan to hold their Red, White and Blue festival in Nottinghamshire again this summer, in spite of welcome splits locally and nationally. To give an international perspective on the problem, we also include an article about the rise of ultra-nationalism in Bulgaria written by a Bulgarian member of AF. As a counterpoint to these worrying developments, four decades having passed since the heady days of rebellion in 1968 (see article on Paris '68 in this issue), the International of Anarchist Federations can only be relieved to be celebrating it's own 40th year anniversary with news of meaningful dialogue between contemporary Bulgarian anarchists and Turkish autonomous groups.

Our ongoing series of articles about anarchist influences on art and culture covers Russian Constructivism in the 1920s when anarchists expropriated Moscow mansions of the rich and turned them into 'circles of proletarian art-printing, poetry and theatre'. Without wishing to encourage the conspiracy theorists, whilst at the same time living in a present day reality of state-sponsored torture and rendition flights, we

also attempt to get to the bottom of governmental obsessions with psychological control such as CIA brainwashing and 'reprogramming' experiments.

A broad mix of reviews cover pamphlets on The Ranters and Kett's Rebellion, a book of 'three line novels' by turn-of-the-last-century anarchist Félix Fénéon and *Beer and Revolution* about the German anarchist movement in New York City in the same period. We also have reviews of *Where Vultures Feast* about the environmental and human devastation wreaked by Shell in Nigeria, and the new look *Black Flag* magazine.

Last but not least, we review the excellent east European and ex-Soviet bloc magazine *Abolishing The Borders* from Below, whose Berlin-based editors we

were very pleased to meet at London's anarchist bookfair last October. In turn, this summer, after running stalls at the New York City bookfair last year and most recently this March in Dublin, the AF has taken *Organise!* and our other publications from West to East, notably to the Zagreb anarchist bookfair in Croatia. This a very challenging time for anarchist organisations as we continue to bridge the international divides created by the World Wars and Cold War in the hope that the modern-day tide of nationalism can be resisted. To succeed we will need to work hard to relay an internationalist perspective amongst the working class at home, so that they are not convinced by the continual anti-immigrant rhetoric of both ultranationalist and so-called democratic governments ★

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BASH THE FASH!

Fascist nowadays has come to be popularly adopted as a harmless pejorative term used towards any person or institution considered to be mildly authoritarian. It is an anachronism that refers to a political movement that existed and failed decades ago. Euronationalist groups like the British National Party (BNP), exploiting fears from the working class over worsening conditions, now attempt to couch their policies in respectable political language. They attempt to present themselves as a radical alternative to the static mainstream political parties who have become increasingly isolated from the concerns of working class communities and have been rewarded for this with a swell in sympathy. Yet despite their apparent transformation, the political programmes of organisations like the BNP still in reality embody the original tenets of fascist ideology. They are authoritarian and hierarchical, organising themselves and understanding society along strict racial lines and promoting a centralised corporatist economic model as an attempt to reconcile the inherent contradictions of capital. These ideas may have been re-branded as the supposed popular face of white Britain and clothed in the guise of a parliamentary political party but their essential



Opposing the National Front, Lewisham 1977

character remains. It represents, as with all statist political movements, the subjugation, oppression and continued exploitation of the working class and active opposition to its organisation through the organs of the state. Fascism is the most explicitly violent incarnation of this political programme. It shows its true colours when family values, concerns for immigration and traditionalism at the ballot box become homophobia, male chauvinism, racialism and despotism in power. Class antagonisms are silenced by a brutal regime that denies the diversity, individuality and creative potential of human life.

Capital and privilege are defended by the entire repressive arsenal of the state as opponents and dissidents are quashed.

Fascist violence

Political violence has remained consistent in fascism's modern counterparts. Despite a commitment to 'community activism', hostility, threats and intimidation continue to exist as a central driving force behind fascist ideology. The BNP has a well publicised history of brutal attacks by its members. Tony Wentworth, the BNP's former student organiser has had convictions alongside Joe Owens

(Nick Griffin's former bodyguard) for assaults against activists at an anti-BNP rally. Owens had also previously served eight months in prison for sending razor blades to a Jewish family through the post. Tony Lecomber—Nick Griffin's key deputy in the party from 1999 until January 2006—was jailed in 1985 after a nail bomb he was carrying to the offices of the Worker's Revolutionary Party exploded and then again in 1991 for assaulting a Jewish teacher who was removing a BNP sticker from a London Underground Station. David Copeland, who exploded a nail bomb at the Admiral Duncan pub in the heart of London's homosexual community, was a former BNP member. Although the BNP distanced itself from Copeland, Griffin wrote in the aftermath of the bombing that homosexuals protesting against the murders were "flaunting their perversion in front of the world's journalists, [and] showed just why so many ordinary people find these creatures disgusting". Wherever fascists are unopposed they are able to carry out systematic campaigns of violence against ethnic minorities, the gay community and working class organisations.

Antifa origins

The term 'antifa' has its original

origins in the 'Antifascismus', working class organisations that were formed in Germany (and also in Italy) in opposition to the fascist parties that were to take power during the interwar years. Originally, being composed only of members of the 'Rotfrontkämpferbund', the paramilitary wing of the German Communist Party, the groups later expanded to encompass a wide range of left wing activists. Its central goal was to present a physical opposition to the emerging fascism. Despite some attempts at mass resistance to national socialism, particularly within the Mössinger General Strike, after Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 the movement began to fall into decline and became increasingly isolated from the communist resistance during the war. Many antifa groups during this period came with Soviet sponsorship and prisoners of war captured during the Eastern Front campaign were encouraged to undertake antifa training. In Spain during the 1930s anti-fascism took on a more explicitly revolutionary character. During the civil war, 'reds' from across the globe mobilised in defence of worker and peasant gains against the republic and fascist armies. '¡No pasarán!' became a rallying cry alongside 'land and liberty' for the international

emancipation of the working classes. It also came to be adopted by British militants during the 1936 Battle of Cable Street. Antifas, including Jewish, socialist and Irish groups, blockaded streets and fought running battles with the police in an attempt to halt a planned march and kick Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists out of the East End.

National Front and British Movement

In the 1970s, fascist and far right parties such as the National Front (NF) and British Movement were making significant gains electorally in the UK and were increasingly confident in their public appearances. This was challenged in 1977 with the Battle of Lewisham, when thousands of people physically stopped an NF march in South London. Shortly after this, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was launched by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The ANL had a campaign of high profile propaganda, as well as anti-fascist squads that attacked NF meetings and paper sales to disrupt their ability to organize. The SWP, whose theoretician Tony Cliff described the period as one of downturn in class struggle, later disbanded the ANL. However, many squad members refused to stop their activities and because of this were expelled from the party in 1981;

The ANL had a campaign of high profile propaganda, as well as anti-fascist squads that attacked NF meetings and paper sales

many then going on to form the group Red Action. In 1985, some members of Red Action and the anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement launched Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), which was to be the focus of militant anti-fascism in the UK for the next 15 years. Similarly, in the 1980s activists from the German autonomous and squatters movement began to adopt militant anti-fascist tactics in the face of neo-Nazi attacks following the reunification of Germany. They rekindled the legacy of the earlier oppositions to national socialism and began to organize to prevent and disrupt planned activities of far right organizations – particularly the Third Position group the NDP (National Democratic Party) which had a history of violence and intimidation. After the decline of AFA in the late 90s, in 2004 members from the Anarchist Federation, Class War, and No Platform founded the UK organization Antifa. Antifa poses an alternative to non-violent, broad front and anti-class groups like the UAF (Unite Against Fascism) and state-linked agencies like Searchlight and continues to imitate the tactics of groups like AFA before them.

Militant values

Despite this chequered history and the diverse adherents the essential values of 'Antifa' have remained consistent. Militant anti-fascists all accept the need for physical confrontation with fascists; they understand that fascist groups promote their ideas through political violence and that there needs to be a counterweight to this. They also accept that if the struggle against fascism is to be successful it must be tackled by communities, not the state.

These principles have led

many to confuse the character of Antifa and militant anti-fascism. These aims clearly have a political quality and come hand-in-hand with a radical, class based critique of capitalist society. Yet while the roots of militant anti-fascism are clearly political, Antifa is essentially a tactic. It is about defending the streets against those who wish to claim them and presenting an active and confrontational face for working class opposition. The 'flabby pacifism' of liberal and broad front organisations has and always will fail. Every inch of political ground that is given to the fascists means more attacks, more intimidation, more intolerance and less unity. The use of violence and the threat of violence is a fabric of our everyday existence. It is used by the state, it is used by the army and it is used by our political opponents. This means that activists have to face some difficult questions. Militants have a clear choice when confronted with fascism. They can either do nothing, resign themselves to pacifistic and statist 'solutions' that only serve to entrench the conditions in which fascism flourishes or they can be active, they can accept a historical responsibility to take a stand and stamp this poison out of their community. It is important however, to hold no illusions over these tactics. It is vital for the health of an organisation that it is conscious of the potential negative effects that the use of violence can have. Activists must be introspective and self-critical. Machismo and hooliganism cannot be tolerated and a concerted effort must be made to stop organisations becoming gendered. An awareness of the stress and commitment that are involved in these situations and the need for solidarity and support

are also important for the well-being of activists.

Leftist criticisms

The secretive nature of many antifascist groups has led to criticisms of 'squadism' from many within the left. They see Antifa and its equivalents as elitist and undemocratic. But such an attitude is a symptom of mentalities that view all workers organisations as necessarily vanguardist and is unfair to activists who risk their safety in defence of their communities. For decades revolutionary left groups have opportunistically used the mobilisation against fascism as a way of trying to swell their membership and the coffers of their party. There are clear practical reasons why militant anti-fascist groups have to retain cautiousness over membership. Not only does the potential illegality of actions warrant vigilance but there are also many precedents of far-right and state infiltration within these organisations. This criticism also ignores Antifa's clear commitment to ideological struggle against fascism and the open community activism which is considered as equally important to successful confrontation with fascists. As is stated in Antifa's founding statement, "education and presenting workable solutions to the problems faced by communities are absolutely vital to the struggle. These may be outside the current remit of Antifa, but we will wholeheartedly support these tactics, and while we may not be able to initiate such activities, we strongly encourage our members to involve themselves in this sort of grass-roots work."

Some will argue that this ideological struggle must be waged

against the fascist themselves, that a direct debate is the most effective way of undermining their ideals. But debate with a fascist is not only futile but impossible. It is an academic fantasy born of no real experience of what the threat of fascism means on your street and in your neighbourhood. It is, after all, difficult to discuss dialectics with a jackboot to your face. Debate represents progress. Fascists are not interested in this. Their ideas are inherently irrational and romanticised, they should not be considered as equal. As has been demonstrated repeatedly, to fascists like Nick Griffin public debate is merely a PR stunt. It is a media spectacle for them to spout their ideological trash.

No platform to fascists

No platform adherents like the Anarchist Federation and Antifa believe that fascists should not be given the authority to proselytize against ethnic communities and minorities and encourage their followers to violence. Giving them a platform gives respectability to their ideas and bolsters the self-assurance of their adherents who may feel it is publicly acceptable to adopt the label 'fascist'. These 'ideas' must never become acceptable. They undermine our confidence, they undermine our unity and they legitimize anti-class attitudes. Halting a BNP paper sale, march or meeting may seem like a trivial affair, but it is vital to disrupt their organisation at all of its levels. Adolf Hitler himself said that the only way the rise of the German Nazi party could have been prevented was if its enemies had recognized it for what it was right at the start and had smashed it in its infancy and with utmost force. It is



necessary for debate to take place, but this has to be within and amongst the community. Issues need to be addressed, activists need to help build workers confidence and encourage struggles in a more productive direction. Intolerance to fascism needs to become a basic fact of community life as solidarity, mutual aid and autonomy are promoted as alternative methods of confronting the ills of capitalist society.

As militant anti-fascists we understand the necessity of Antifa and physical confrontation tactics. But as anarchist communists we also understand that ultimately the only decisive way to defeat fascism is to eliminate the conditions under which it develops. Fascism will end when an organised working class

An anti-fascist demonstration, Glasgow 1991

is able to overthrow capital and the state and reconstruct society along libertarian lines. Fascism is a product of weak and disillusioned people. Capitalism argues that prosperity comes through strength and this imperialism is mirrored in their ideology. Anarchist communism also argues that we can be strong, but that we discover this through solidarity and self-organisation. It will only be when these ideas are the natural principles of the working class that we will be able to decisively give fascism the boot.

ANTIFA is a collective of militant anti-fascists committed to opposing the rise of the far-right in Britain and abroad. They believe in the 'no platform' philosophy and the tradition of fighting fascism/racism stretching back to Cable Street, Red Lion Square, Lewisham, and Waterloo. They are a network of various organisations and individuals who see anti-fascism as part of the class struggle.
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Fascism and democracy – Two cheeks of the same arse

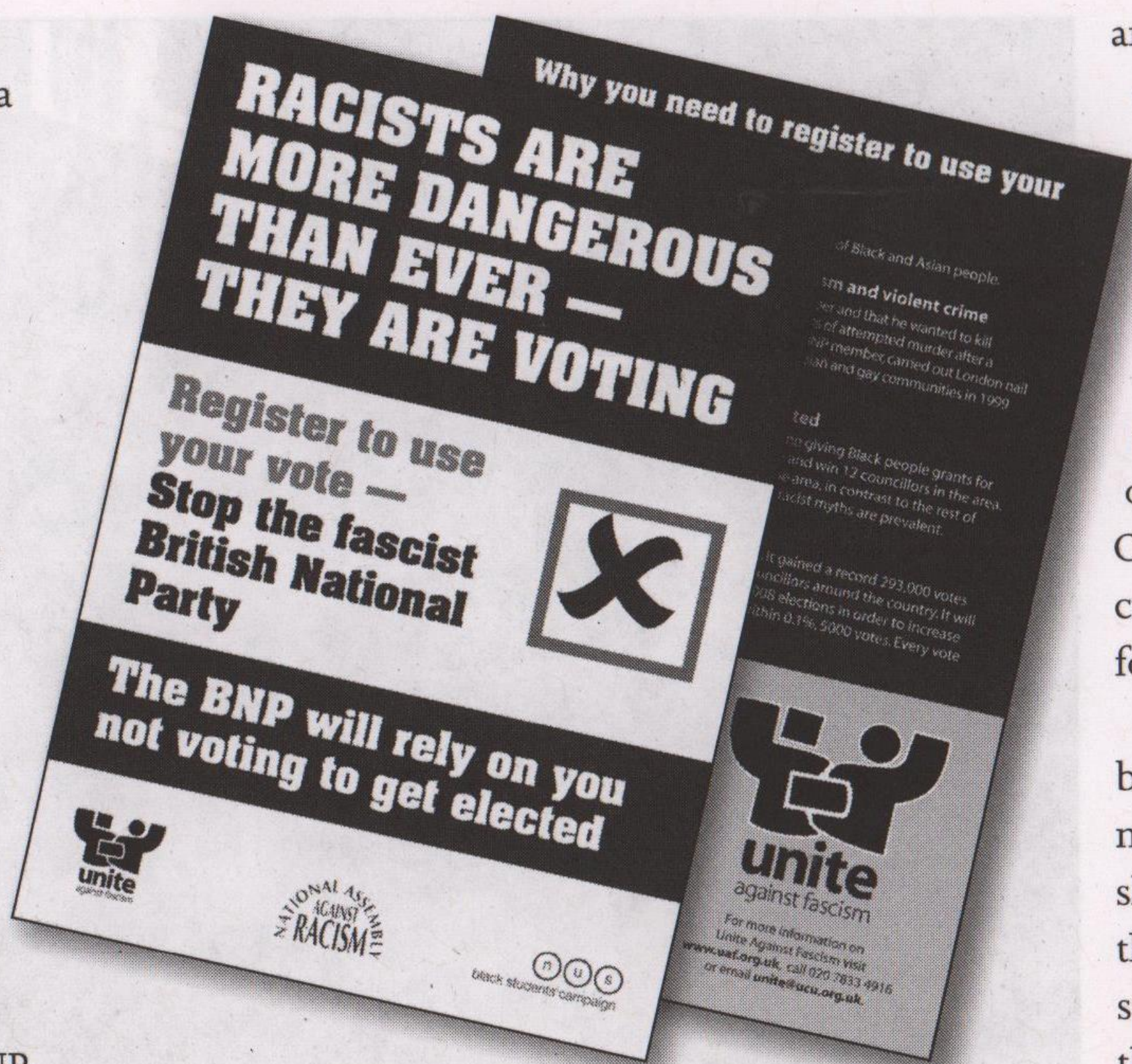
The past 20 years in Britain have been characterised by a level of workplace struggle so low that a whole generation is growing up with no understanding of basic class solidarity. Added to that has been the intensification of the trend towards a globalised economy¹. Traditional industries have fled to lower wage parts of the world. Along with the export of traditional jobs has come a new wave of mass migration across the globe. Already demoralised by the defeats of the Thatcher era, for the working class in the place of resistance has come a sense of alienation, isolation and despair. As a result organisations like the BNP are picking up increased support.

The rise of the BNP in Britain and the NF in France have given sections of the left² something refreshingly familiar to fight against—the spectre of fascism. This so-called anti-fascism reveals itself in pressure groups like Unite Against Fascism (UAF) and both versions of Respect, the one run by the SWP and the one by the homophobic George Galloway.

Questions and answers

But we need to take some time and ask what this fascism is and more importantly what its antifascist counterpart among the liberals and left represents.

Everyone knows that the Italian Fascists came to power in the 1920s and that the German Nazis did the same in 1933. They know the brutality of both regimes. We are taught in school about the Holocaust and the death of millions in the concentration camps and gas chambers. If we dig deeper we find that these same fascist governments imprisoned, beat and murdered trades unionists and socialist and



A recent leaflet put out by Unite Against Fascism calling for a vote against the fascists

communist workers. We also hear the famous statement by Hitler that if the opposition had fought him on the streets, then the Nazis would never have come to power.

What we are not encouraged to ask is why and how they came to power. Neither are we encouraged to ask just how they differ from normal, democratic capitalism. Whatever nonsense the left spout, the Fascist and Nazi governments were called into existence to strengthen and unify the power of Capital in their respective states. However, they did not do this by first defeating the power of the organised working class. In both cases this had already been done by social democracy and its union allies. The workers' uprisings in Germany were put down with extreme brutality by a Social Democratic government. In Italy the state had already beaten the communists before Mussolini came to power.

Coalitions against the working class

In Italy and Germany, Mussolini

and Hitler were invited to lead coalition governments. In Germany's case this was by a president who had been partially put in power by the social democrats themselves. They came to power to sort out their national Capitals at times of economic and political chaos. Crucially, the working class in both cases did not exist as an independent force any longer.

The effect of anti-fascism before the wars was to mobilise millions of workers for their own slaughter. Better to save democracy³ than to live under fascism, they said, carefully forgetting that this democracy had cheerfully surrendered to fascism in the first place after first murdering the very militants capable of fighting Hitler and Mussolini. This 'democracy' fire-bombed Dresden, annihilated Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and it partitioned India, leading to the deaths of millions. It's record of slaughter is just as vile and when we add the toll from its war time allies in the Soviet Union, surpasses even the wildest dreams of any storm trooper.

Voting against modern day thugs?

So what of today? There is little doubt that the actions of Nazi gangs terrorise whole communities. There is little doubt that the murders they carry out, the attacks on workers and the vile racism they peddle need to be opposed. Anarchists and others play an active part these fights.

But what of supporting democracy? It is common during election times for anti-fascists to mass leaflet working class areas urging them not to vote for the BNP. Left unsaid is the statement 'vote Labour', in its place comes 'vote for democratic parties'. This

is tantamount to saying, don't vote for the fascists, instead vote for the democratic state. It means that the left can spout socialist rhetoric, whilst at the same time having the option of simply questioning one form of state control instead of beginning to contest the greater problem of what actually underpins the state itself, capitalism. As their objective is simply the replacement of one form of capitalism by another, in this case a form of bureaucratic state control, this obviously suits them nicely.

To put it another way, they say 'let's oppose one form of state control by making another, nicer, form stronger'. Worse, they are saying that our power doesn't arise from our collective existence as members of the working class, rather it comes from the ballot box as expressed by atomised individual citizens.

There's no class any more ...

In fact, it has been the state's project since the late 1970s to destroy the very concepts of class, class solidarity and unity. That has been the whole thrust of Thatcher and Blair's governments. We are exhorted to play our full part in democracy, to be responsible citizens, to see ourselves as individual members of society. But this is a society that has become more and more totalitarian. Unions have been incorporated into the management of society. The old workers' parties have given up any pretence of fighting for workers. Instead we get a 'national curriculum' in schools, we get a surveillance society, ID cards and persecution of strangers.

The BNP bogey-men provide the excuse the left needs to help weaken our class further, but the left fails to ask the question, 'why do workers

vote for the BNP?' Just like in the 30s, this happens because of the defeats already suffered. The legacy of the defeat of the Miners Strike still reverberates. During the 80s and early 90s the fascists as mass political parties with ambitions of electoral success hardly existed. This was when the working class was fighting industrially and in its communities. Racism undoubtedly existed, but failed to manifest itself politically outside of small groups of violent thugs when confronted with white, black and asian workers all refusing to pay the Poll Tax.

Whilst the Poll Tax rebellion has become part of working class history (except in Scotland where local councils are still chasing unpaid bills), racism has grown stronger. The left and Labour have left the working class estates, lured away by the smell of government. Class is forgotten amongst smart suits and wheeling and dealing with bosses and their lackeys. Crumbs of regeneration money are thrown to our poorest communities, but always making sure it's on a divide and rule basis – first some money for Asian areas, then white, never all at the same time. It is amongst communities deliberately segregated by local states that the likes of the BNP find a resonance. This is a resonance founded on neglect and desertion⁴.

Vote for us, not for them!

The liberal anti-fascists want us instead to vote for their friends in New Labour and the Lib Dems or even the modern Tories. They want us to turn to the liberal churches and to the mosques in their inter-faith forums, into the hands of those who preach unity of capitalist and worker against the reality of class struggle.

They skim over the facts of New Labour state rule – racist Immigration

Acts, deportations of asylum seekers, cuts in benefit, attacks on single parents. They ignore the role of New Labour in the war in Iraq or the complicity of the British state in supporting oppression and murder in Palestine. They ignore the fact that more people have died in wars since 1945 than did during World War II.

To sum up—fascists need silencing. But our enemy's enemies are not always our friends. Fascism and democracy are just two different ways of running the same stinking capitalist system. They are two cheeks on the same arse. When workers struggle, fascism and racism are weakened. Our objective should be to strengthen struggle in our workplaces and communities, not to be diverted into capitalist battles between left and right, democratic and dictatorial, black or white.

Other texts

- **Fascism/Anti-fascism** by Gilles Dauve (Jean Barrot) – www.libcom.org/library/fascism-anti-fascism-gilles-dauve
- **The Menace of Anti-Fascism, Subversion** – www.af-north.org/Subversion/subversion.htm
- The Edelweiss Pirates, in AF pamphlet 'Resistance to Nazism' – www.afed.org.uk/ace/anarchist_resistance_to_nazism.html
- Riots in Oldham, **Organise!** no.56, Winter 2001 – <http://www.afed.org.uk/org/org56.pdf>

1 Interestingly when the Left complain of globalisation, the far right mirror their talk with references to a globalist order.
2 When we talk about left and right we are referring to parties and organisations that seek to administer a society based on buying and selling, wage labour and the state. We argue that anarchist communists stand outside this divide, wanting instead the destruction of both the state and all that constitutes the capitalist system.
3 For simplicity's sake, this text simply refers to 'democracy' rather than capitalist or statist democracy. It is the contention of the author that forms of organisation adopted by revolutionary workers differ in kind from the forms of government normally described as democratic.
4 See the article Riots in Oldham in **Organise!** 56 for an analysis of how this process fostered racism in the north of England.

Brainwashing

and the secret state

This article draws on Daniel Streatfeild's BBC Four Samuel Johnson Prize-winning non-fiction book *Brainwash* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2006). In it Streatfeild traces governmental obsession with trying to brainwash subjects as a means of controlling their behaviour. Effective 'brainwashing', as a specific, deliberate and controllable scientific process, he concludes, is a fiction and has never been successfully undertaken. Attempts at it have been as laughable as they are barbaric. No one has been able to force a subject to both knowingly and willingly choose to believe in something they didn't want to and act on it.

Nonetheless the evidence Streatfeild has uncovered reflects disturbingly on modern governments and security forces. The case that they have never in fact been successful demonstrates also the extent to which popular culture has absorbed the myth that the state actually has this kind of mysterious power. How many people have taken at face value the notion that, for example, in the Moscow show trials of 1936–38 the confessing defendants were genuine, having been 'brainwashed' into identification with the State by some unknown technique? The truth is in fact that any changes in behaviour patterns or apparent changes in systems of belief and value are produced far more effectively by modern torture techniques, both 'legal' and 'illegal'.

But the point is that security agencies and capitalists try these things. Here we outline Streatfeild's findings on the CIA specifically.

Mind wiping

Since 1951, the CIA had been



Dominic Streatfeild, above, and book

interested in the problem of how to dispose of its burnt out agents. A memorandum at the time warned that "blown agents, exploited agents and difficult defectors that may wish to re-defect" posed a considerable threat to the agency. There was a need, went on the memo, to create "semi-permanent amnesia for a period of one year". After debating lobotomy, the CIA came up with the brilliant idea of hitting people on the head, and two devices, including a pancake like blackjack were devised for the purpose. However the agency found itself short on volunteers and the line between forgetful and dead was too fine.

This was part of a project called MKULTRA, a project that ran for twenty three years, as far as we know, previously called ARTICHOKE, and prior to that BLUEBIRD, not often as 'whacky' as all that, but clearly the work of mad men out to see how far human kicks can go, as we shall see.

The project was set up to research mind control techniques. The agency by 1957 had discovered Dr. Ewan D. Cameron of the Allan Memorial Institute in Canada. Between then and 1960 they funded him to the tune of \$75,000. Cameron was a psychiatrist who's methods on his

patients included stress tolerance, desensitisation, drugs that deconstructed patterns of human behaviour, more specifically wiping his patients memories bone clean till they shit their pants and sucked their thumbs all day, and then subjecting them to reprogramming, all in the aid of curing mental illness and unacceptable

behaviour patterns. The CIA fell in love immediately.

Cameron, possibly one of the worlds greatest ever sadists, was interested in permanently changing so called aberrant behaviour patterns by cleaning them from his patients minds permanently with ECT and then recreating new ones of his own. He was a respected psychiatrist and released papers on the subject that caught the interest of the CIA.

Most doctors gave ECT (electro convulsive shock therapy) a maximum of twelve shocks to the brain over four weeks. This guide line was mainly to the effects of ECT on memory loss. However, this was precisely what interested Cameron. He gave twelve shocks a day for at least a period of a month, sometimes much longer. The result was substantial to complete memory loss. He wrote this was so "Old sick patterns had been obliterated" and "reorganisation set in". He called the technique "Annihilation".

Having turned his patients into vegetables, Cameron then went about reprogramming them. This was done by repeating a taped message to them over and over, whilst they were restrained by paralyzing drugs in their rooms. The message usually ended "When you see paper on the floor you pick it up." Cameron later decided that since the patients resisted it was not necessary for them to be awake for the procedure, and probably mercifully they were kept asleep months on end. The result of all Cameron's work was to create living zombies and forty year old babies, capable of nothing but becoming vagrants.

Truth drugs

The truth drug search goes back to the Second World War, starting

with mescaline and scopolamine by the Nazis. Cannabis was also used, beginning in May 1943, by the American Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA.

With the formation of the CIA and ARTICHOKE by 1953, cocktails of truth drugs were used, the old favourite being to select a harrowing collection of uppers and downers. Barbiturates such as sodium amyltal (amobarbital) or pentathol (sodium thiopental), were mixed with the amphetamines Benzedrine and Methedrine. The trick was to enhance the truth inducing nature of both drugs. Barbiturates loosened the tendency for self censorship but put people to sleep, amphetamines countered this and made people want to talk. The subject was put to sleep first with 2.5% sodium pentathol injection, then 5 to 20 milligrams of desoxyn to wake them up. If they got too exited the subject was injected with more pentathol, the needle being kept in the arm. Hypnosis was also used. It was an attempt to induce violent cathartic reactions, alternately putting the subject to sleep, then waking them up till they were sufficiently confused to be coerced into reliving an experience from their past.

Experiments with LSD as a truth drug were carried out by, amongst others, MI6, US military and the CIA. MI6's experiments ran from 1953 to 1954 and they were not overly impressed with this particular method, one stating that you might as well expect a truthful answer from sticking a pin in someone's testicles as LSD. In fact some in the CIA were of the opinion that the realms of gibberish it made interrogated people talk were so distracting to interrogators, that it could be used as an anti-truth drug and given to

operatives to protect information!

The CIA were not happy with experimenting on volunteers, but wanted to see the drug in the field, so MKULTRA recruited George White from the bureau of narcotics to work with LSD and other drugs in the CIA's expanding pharmacy, on criminals, who were unlikely to be believed. For this purpose White set up safe houses with two way mirrors, and recruited a brothel-worth of prostitutes to use sex and drugs to extract information.

A problem associated with the use of all these drugs was that it was impossible to know if a subject was telling the truth or just fantasising.

Cameron then went about reprogramming them by repeating a taped message over and over, whilst they were restrained by paralyzing drugs

Hypnosis

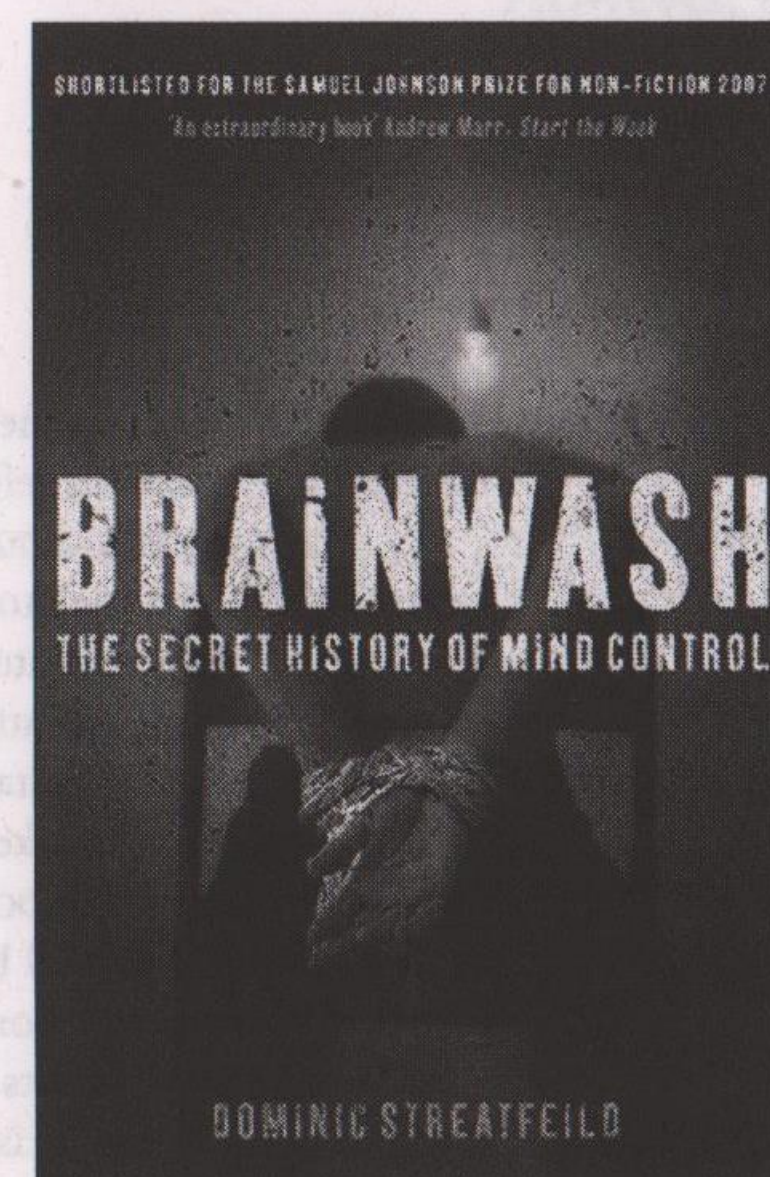
There is no reliable information or declassified documents on the use of hypnosis to either produce a Manchurian Candidate style killer or to induce false memories. However, there was considerable and promising research by the CIA into the former, and of the latter it has been proved easily possible to create the most traumatic and often ridiculous false memories that are firmly believed by the victim.

The outcome of these experiments was that it was easy to get some one to kill another person under hypnosis

if they didn't know that that was what they were doing, or knew it wasn't real (e.g. an unloaded gun), but it remained conjecture whether you could really get them to kill someone under post-hypnosis if it was something they didn't want to do.

So the question remained in 1953 "Could we seize a subject and, in the space of an hour or so, by post-hypnotic control have him crash an airplane, wreck a train etc.?" The CIA came to the conclusion that "Suppose that while under hypnosis a subject is told a loved one's life is in danger from a maniac and that only means of rescue is to shoot the person designated as a maniac? Three expert practitioners ... say that in such circumstances murder would be committed." The CIA went out to try this theory for real after inducing one CIA secretary to shoot another sleeping, under hypnosis, though not for real. ARTICHOKE planned to capture a former CIA asset, drug him at a party, kidnap him and hypnotise him to perform an assassination. How ever in this instance at least, ARTICHOKE got cold feet. It was too problematic to hypnotise someone against their will, it would either take a special room, or the subject would have to be hypnotised instantly by grabbing his neck and taking him to unconsciousness, a process that could be deadly. Apparently the hypnotist they recruited for the act lost his nerve and cowered in a corner of the room.

It does however seem unlikely that an organisation like the CIA would be so easily put off from such a project, and would not go to crueller and more ruthless ends to see the project reach fruition. They have proved themselves as evil as they are in equal parts stupid and imaginative. One thing for sure, they



wouldn't tell people. An interesting example of the CIA's imagination, cruelty and stupidity, was the cat controlled by electrodes they used as a spy. The cat came to a sticky end when the agents controlling it lost their concentration and it went under a car.

Coercion

The CIA began research on interrogation techniques almost from its inception. The starting point was the Moscow Show Trials. What was impressive to the CIA was not the extraction of information, which was clearly made up, but the willingness of the victims, with no signs of being tortured, to convict themselves of the most heinous crimes against the state such as attempted assassination of Stalin, to say they were fascist dogs and fascist spies, and to demand that they receive the maximum penalty of being shot for themselves, their comrades, and even their loved ones. The CIA had encountered something new.

Some of the methods the CIA discovered in the Moscow Show Trials are used by the CIA and army today, as recently as Guantanamo bay. To soften up a prisoner you first left them with their own fear. After six weeks in solitary as well as being made to stand for long periods, and sensory deprivation, disruption of

sleep patterns and humiliation, the victim would blame themselves rather than their captor for their condition. After a while the subject would start talking to themselves and hallucinate. Then the interrogation would begin. They were told to name their crimes and taught to be consistent. A punishment/reward system was then developed. This soon became haphazard, behaviour designed to please could be punished by being threatened to be shot, rewards such as coffee or a cigarette would be offered for no reason at all. The end result was that confusion and disorientation meant the subject did not know whether they were guilty or not and would do anything to please his captors. But they do not consciously change their value system; the change occurs despite their efforts.

The Chinese communist approach was a little different, in that they did not want confession but conformity. They called this 'mind cleansing' and it is from this term that the Miami Daily News first invented the term 'brainwashing'. All this originated in Lenin's interest in Pavlov's conditioned dogs, many years earlier.

Partially developed from these forms of interrogation is the CIA's KUBARK techniques. KUBARK relies not on interrogation, but forming a dependency in the subject upon

the interrogator. This is termed 'regression'. The subject is to be induced with "debility, dependence and dread". The KUBARK manual also talks about the old favourite sensory deprivation, such as putting a hood over someone's head. Better still, put them in a cell without light or sound. Then manipulate the subject's, "diet, sleep pattern and other fundamentals". This is disorientation to create "feelings of fear and helplessness."

In 1961 Lawrence Hinkle, a psychiatrist, was asked to do a study on the physiological states of interrogation victims for the CIA. He stated that stressing techniques that we have seen used in the Iraq war and Afghanistan, such as wall-standing, hooding and malnutrition were not just attacks on the will power. They were creating a chemical imbalance in the subject's brain, lowering their ability to resist.

In a final word, its worth saying that the CIA is a soft target. The allegations made against it are possible because of the institutionalised culture of violence and so called free speech of American society. But there is no need to believe that this behaviour is not typical of all intelligence communities around the world and, in fact, the CIA could learn a lot from interrogations carried out in Northern Ireland by our own agencies.

After six weeks in solitary, sensory deprivation, disruption of sleep patterns and humiliation, the victim would start talking to themselves and hallucinate. Then the interrogation would begin.

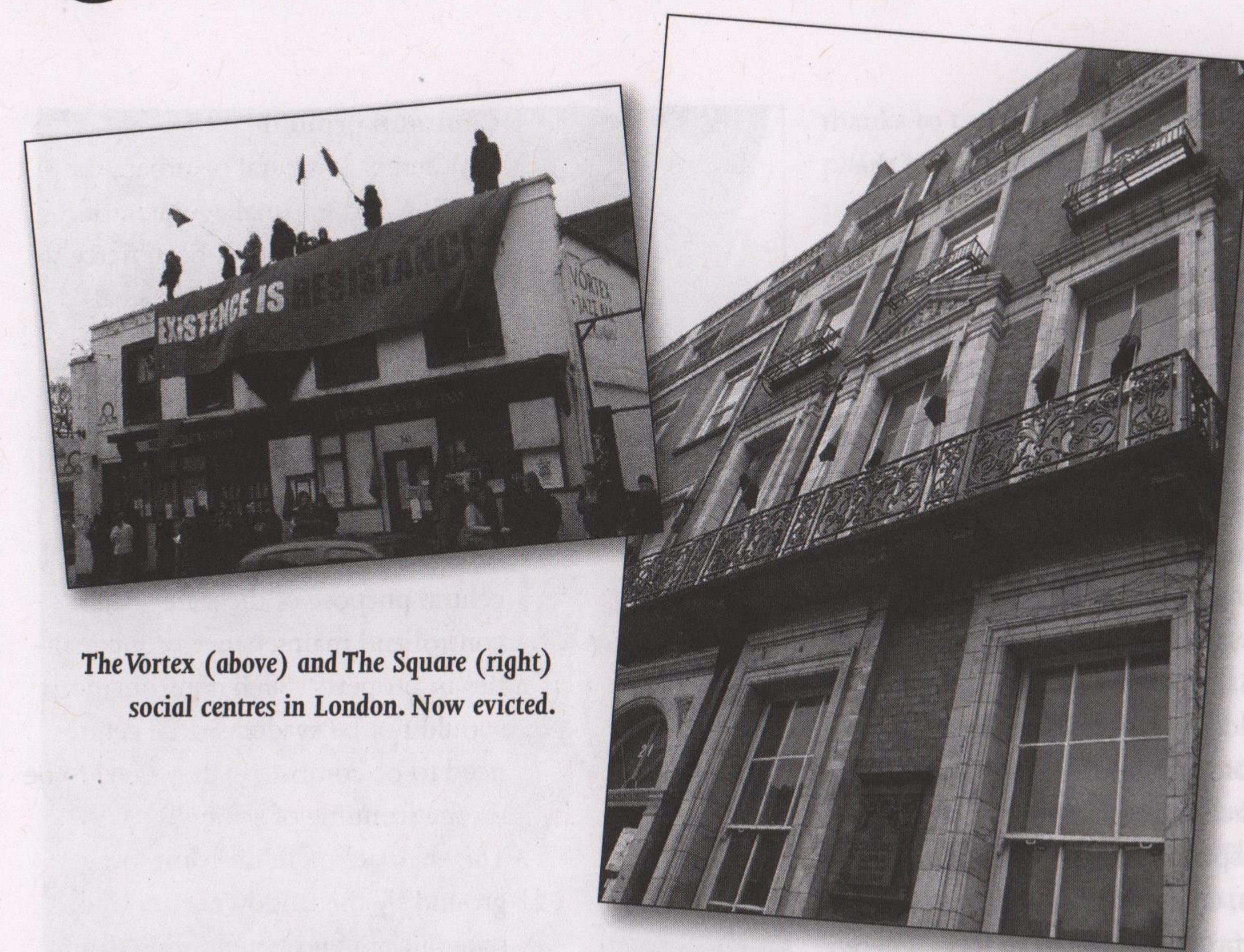
'Social centre' — a working class history

The reclamation of 'social space', whether in terms of common ground for a community or for one's own household, has been a clarion call of the oppressed throughout history. Squatting, expropriation, reclamation (whatever the appropriate term) dates to the imposition of private property rights itself and the struggle for free access to basic resources. Indeed, most industrialised cultures still harbour a traditional belief in 'squatter's rights', whether it is recognised in law or not. In England such sentiments stretch as far back as the injustice felt by landless peasants towards massive land relocations following the Norman Conquest.

Industrialisation, however, meant fundamental changes in the nature and purpose of this struggle. Throughout the 1800s major cities in Britain were subject to campaigns to preserve public space. This time the demands were no longer based on peasant claims to fuel or hunting rights. Rather, there was a desire to save free land as a space to socialise and for fun and games. Working class people were anxious to preserve a social sphere away from the miserable conditions of work in the factories and the oppressive environment of the city. In the 1820s hundreds rioted in Loughton to prevent a landowner felling trees in Epping Forest; On Wanstead Flats in 1871, thousands of working people pulled down enclosure fences after the Earl of Cowley enclosed 20 acres of wasteland; And on Leyton Marches, on the 1st August 1892, three thousand people organised through the Leyton Lammas Lands Defence Committee to pull down railings unpopularly erected around common land.

Dwellings

However, in response to the



The Vortex (above) and The Square (right) social centres in London. Now evicted.

increasing alienation of heavily urbanised and industrialised city's the working class began to gradually move further afield. The early 1900s saw a wave of rural squatting with families from the city constructing makeshift communities and self-made resorts on previously unoccupied land in the countryside and on the coast. Tents, old buses, sheds, broken railway carriages were converted into weekend holiday dwellings for the urban poor. Such communities were renowned for their libertarian atmosphere and attracted their own 'Bohemian' clientele. Actors and actresses, artists and writers, stars of music halls and early films all spent time at the DIY holiday resorts. Unfortunately, the advent of WWII brought an end to such practices. Most of the coastal dwellings were devastated by the fighting. The war also gave the state the opportunity to heavily legislate against any further violation of landowner property rights.

As a result of war time restrictions on building, large cities in

early post-War Britain faced a severe housing crisis. In the face of the threat of homelessness thousands of empty properties were taken over by squatters, organised by working-class and socialist organisations and with the support of anarchists. The squatters took over churches, hotels, mansion houses and hospitals. Tenement apartments that had been lying vacant for up to ten years were taken over and converted into households. These were very much self-managed affairs with squatters organising their own communities and Defence Committees in reaction to state oppression. The response from property owners and local government was predictable. Many families were forcibly evicted from their homes and key activists were arrested. However, despite heavy legal oppression the movement did not completely fade away. Many activists continued to play a key role in the fight for better housing and against cuts in public services. Local authorities were still trying to evict squatters as late as 1959.

Squatters' movement

The 1960s saw the birth of the modern squatters' movement. In 1968 a group of housing activists formed the London Squatters Campaign and in December of that year they occupied a luxury block of flats which had stood empty for four years. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s thousands of working people in major cities moved themselves into empty dwellings. By now, however, the nature and purposes of the social spaces within these reclaimed buildings had become much more ambitious. Large squats were able to facilitate community gardens, gig spaces, radical film collectives, bars, coffee shops, libraries and the provision of cheap food. There was also an incorporation of newer political movements with the setting up of free women's, LGBT centres and unemployment unions.

It is in the solidifying of all these trends that has led to the modern 'social centre' and social centre movement. The idea of 'social centre' relates to two fundamental impulses inherent in the struggle of the working class against the conditions of capital. The first is the desire for self-organisation, especially in the provision for the very basic needs for shelter. In a society where it is more acceptable for an empty building or abandoned land to waste than satisfy basic human needs it becomes necessary to take direct action. This has led to land being reclaimed by the oppressed and converted into self-managed communities. The second impulse is for leisure, the need for a social space away from the drudgery and boredom of work. Again in a society where our mental health is sacrificed for our productive capacity it becomes necessary to take direct action.

Common ground

Whether it is rural or urban, the creation and self-management of social space has always been fiercely confronted by the state. The challenge such acts represent not only to sacrosanct liberal notions of private property rights but also in terms of self-organisation of the class, results in an open defiance of oppressive, capitalist relations. It confronts the central purpose of the state—the control and maintenance of inequalities in property. Such confrontation should not be evaded. Social centres need to be combative; they need to be on the frontline of struggle.

The encroachment on common ground by the landowner and the state did not end when industrialisation began. Today, in our advanced capitalist societies social space is still shrinking. Working class space is still shrinking. While the city executives may have their spas and their private clubs, community centres, public baths and libraries are disappearing across the country (or falling into private hands). The free public house and the union clubs of generations before are becoming a rarity. Localities are becoming more and more commercialised as local shop is replaced by the chain store, high street by the shopping mall. Leisure is no longer 'free' time, it is a commodity. Social space is not social at all but bought at the expense of others labour and provides further opportunity to buy and sell. The idea of voluntary association, of communal enjoyment, of free social time is disappearing. It is imperative therefore that the modern social centre movement clings to its class heritage.

Social centres

Social centres have the potential to be the face of class struggle, to

present an easy point of access to others in the community, to encourage communication, education and confidence within the class. Workingmen's clubs, union clubs and public houses have in the past typically represented a forum for agitation and organisation amongst workers. Commercialisation of these social spheres represents yet another barrier to the self-emancipation and unity of the working class. Social centres have the potential to reclaim this legacy, to act as a focal hub of organisation and struggle. This also represents an important step in taking class struggle out of the confines of the workplace and into every aspect of community life. It has the potential to act as a source of class power outside of the industrial relationship, to unify struggles under a broader banner and fight for the extension of self-managed space into every community and workplace. Social centres must seek to destroy as much as they hope to create.

If they are to do this then efforts must be made to reach out to the community, to be involved intimately in the concerns of working people and to win their support. Insularity must be avoided at all costs; centres must be welcoming places and efforts must be made to steer clear of the activist ghetto. Most importantly, if they are to be successful they must satisfy a need. 'Social' is after all the key term in social centre. They must allow for the reproduction of unconstrained social life for all. Social centres should reflect the need to fulfil a desire to be a human being, rather than simply a consumer. To give workers a safe place to relax, to kick back and to have fun.

'Unfashionable' Balkan nationalism?

The rise of ultra-nationalist politics in Bulgaria

The Balkan states share more things than they would like to admit. Their fates in the supposed 'powder-keg of Europe' are closely intertwined, not least through myths and cultures. Krali Marko is a hero for Serbians, Bulgarians and Macedonians, the drink slivovica has its counterpart in rakia or raki, and of course minorities get left on the 'wrong' side of the border. What the Second World War managed to 'solve' in Central Europe, with more or less ethnically homogeneous states (there are a few exceptions of course) being created thanks to a genocidal policy and mass movements both East and West in the last months of the war, it didn't do the same in the region between the Black and Adriatic seas.

What runs through the region is a shared accentuated nationalism, arising from defensive reactions between neighbours. As the recent example in Serbia and Kosovo has shown, the problem always stems from an uneasy domestic situation. The history of the Balkans is actually littered with some surprising tolerance of minorities. Tito's Yugoslavia was a good example, Mazower paints a picture of a heterogeneous but prosperous Salonica in his *City Of Ghosts*, and Bulgaria saved its Jews from the Holocaust. Yet the nineties and the first years of the 21st century have seen conflicts arise again. After the horrors of the civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, many things remained unsolved – Kosovo's independence and the consequences for the diminishing, shrinking Serbian republic; the status of the Former Yugoslav Republic Of Macedonia, poised precariously between a true independence, claims to its name by Greece and conflicts over history with Bulgaria. The root cause



of all this is nationalism of a peculiar Balkan variety.

Names and images pop up when we think of nationalism in the Balkans – Milosevic, Srebrenica, paramilitaries, that famous song by Goran Bregovic – 'Kalashnikov'. Most are, of course, linked with the former Yugoslavia. But there are the other 'quiet' nationalisms that are as potentially dangerous if not more. The accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the European Union in 2007 not only brought Cyrillic, more corruption and a new Daily Mail campaign against. It also enabled the creation of the right-wing and nationalist Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty group in the European parliament, a group that now doesn't exist due to the fallout after Italian measures against Romanian immigrants prompted the Greater Romanian Party to withdraw from this coalition. However short-lived, the ability for this group to emerge,

thanks to two quite insignificant players in European politics, does point to the strength of nationalism in these two relatively stable Balkan countries.

Bulgaria and 'Bulgarisation'

The example of Bulgaria is illustrative of the continuing problems in the peninsula. Bulgaria is a country of nearly eight million people, with a history of toleration of minorities and with a substantial Roma and ethnic Turk population. For years, even under the Ottoman rule that was endured for nearly five centuries, ethnic Bulgarians and ethnic Turks could live door to door. The program of the Bulgarian Central Revolutionary Committee, the 1870s organisation for the liberation of the country forbade Bulgarians from attacking ordinary Turkish citizens in the struggle for independence. This stability did continue into the 1980s until Todor Zhivkov, the infamous ruler for the majority of the People's Republic's life, started a campaign for 'Bulgarisation' of the Turks in Bulgaria, forcing them to change their names, resulting in almost 300,000 leaving the country. The mid-to-late 1980s climate of terrorism by ethnic Turks, police actions against whole villages in their drive to 'Bulgarise' them and then the sudden collapse of the monolithic state threw things wide into the open. Rampant privatisation and ineffectual government of the nineties left a legacy of division that simply did not exist before. Many Roma families, left without the jobs provided for them under communism, fell into poverty and crime. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) monopolised the Turk vote and has been an element of every coalition government since its inception. Unemployment rose generally.

Latent nationalism lifts its head

It was, in short, a good climate for latent nationalism to come to the fore – one that was present since the 80s. The National Union Ataka is the natural outgrowth of this. This is a party that was created only two months before the 2005 legislative elections, a coalition of insignificant right-wing and ex-communist splinters. It managed to win 9% of the popular vote in June of that year, bagging 21 seats out of 240 in parliament. Little, you might say, but considering it was running against parties with decades long histories such as the Socialist Party (BSP) or ones that had already had a stint in office such as the National Movement Simeon II (NMSII), it is no mean feat. What's more, its leader – Volen Siderov – managed to poll 25% at the presidential elections of 2006. He was the only candidate apart from the winner, Georgi Parvanov, who made it to the second round, brought about by low voter turnout. For a party that is based around a strong Führerprinzip (leader principle akin to that in Nazi Germany), that is significant.

This use of evocative language by the author is of course, deliberate. The party has been called fascist by many, and its members do appropriate the jackbooted style of many ultranationalist groupings. A closer examination of its stances, set out in the '20 Points of Ataka', reveals a nationalist, populist party. What are its main currents? At the heart of Ataka's political program lies a statement that Bulgaria is a monolithic, one-nation state, indivisible along ethnic or religious lines. The party also attacks the MRF and the national channel's news in Turkish indirectly by stating that the national language is Bulgarian only, and that any ethnic

parties should be prohibited. The party also supports an ill-defined criminalisation of verbal attacks on national 'holies'. On economic issues, it supports a protectionist policy and state provision of health, social security and "spiritual and material prosperity" for all citizens. The party aims for isolationist foreign policies, including a withdrawal from NATO, operations in the Middle East and the expulsion of US bases from national soil. Quite apart from that, unofficially but widely supported, is the inclusion of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in political decisions – a de-facto merging of state and church.

The popular media is distinctly patriotic, as in the popular history show of Bozhidar Dimitrov that champions any Bulgarian achievement with little academic justification

What emerges is a party that cleverly combines populist policies designed to appeal to both business people and the common person on economic ground, and a tapping of cultural chauvinism that is an expression of dissatisfactions on the part of many Bulgarians with the current state of affairs. It is easy to blame Romas for crimes and the West for poor conditions and whipping up the historical Turkish threat is also

popular. Calling to spirituality, which is on the upswing amongst the traditionally conservative country, is also a good source of support. The official program of Ataka is worrying enough – it would create a state based on ethnic supremacy where other ethnic groups would not be allowed to be heard in the political process.

Traditional scapegoats

Privately, things are worse. The author himself has seen the graffiti – "all gypsies into soap" – and a visit to the forums of Ataka's newspaper would reveal what its members really want. Complete social regression is the norm of the day, the ideals of Christianity imposed on all society; scapegoating of the traditional suspects – Romas and ethnic Turks which goes hand-in-hand with anti-Semitism (which Siderov himself is guilty of in his various books). Ataka is not a fascist party then – if it was it would be easy for people to dismiss it. It is an ultranationalist entity that has addressed real poverty, income disparity, crime and corruption at the highest levels of politics in radical ways – nationalisation, exclusion of foreign business in preference for domestic firms, for example. At the same time it has taken unofficial harsh actions against ethnic minorities and has branded the current government as one of Turks and not Bulgarians. Centred around a charismatic 'strong' and 'intelligent' leader figure with a sharp tongue, the party is rallying social conservatism and economic promises that hark back to an almost quasi-Communist state of the nostalgic yesteryear. Alongside Christianity and populist history that is directed against "those other Bulgarians—the Macedonians" the party has a strong base from which to build on.

The consequences would be disastrous, of course. Bulgaria is not faced with the same problems that Serbia is—sectarian troubles—but it has a very sizable and growing Roma population while the nominally Bulgarian population is facing a demographic collapse, a Roma population that, it has to be noted, was not forced to revert to crime when they had housing, educational and job prospects in the years of Communism (not to excuse that state of affairs, of course). But rational debate is thin on the ground in Bulgaria. The popular media is distinctly patriotic, as in the popular history show of Bozhidar Dimitrov that champions any Bulgarian achievement with little academic justification, plus Ataka with its own channel. People find it easier to blame others rather than take action themselves. You might say that the election results show little, yet the voter turnout has always been extremely low—under 50%—and Ataka can only grow, with many of the voters who didn't support the party in 2005 now turning towards it. The last polls in Bulgaria showed the party second in popularity only to the ruling Socialists. When the generation of the 'red grandmas'—the elderly who vote Socialist out of nostalgia and promises of social security—leaves the political scene, and with some flocking to a party that is also promising pensions, who knows what might happen?

What we are facing is quite frankly a quiet nationalism rising up in a country that, for the Balkans, is stable and on the upsurge in economic terms. This nationalism threatens civil war between ethnic groups, even if a Kosovo scenario is unlikely because there are no real regions in the country that could secede or are



Nationalists marching in Bulgaria

likely to do so (even where ethnic Bulgarians are the minority). Time will tell. The next legislative elections will show whether the nationalist party have retained their appeal. But as long as it manages to play at its populist game while the establishment does nothing to address organised crime and corruption among its own ranks, the mentality of the population is unlikely to change. With the centre and centre-right of the political spectrum fractured in a way that we only think Communists can follow, there are few alternatives to the status quo in a political sense. Whilst everyone looks to Serbia or the Caucasus for the obvious signs of nationalism and ethnic trouble – as has been fashionable for a long time, a quiet, 'unfashionable' force is arising in a country that the EU would like to portray as a model for the Western Balkans.

Bulgarian anarchism

Unfortunately outside the parliamentary alternatives, the grassroots

base of activism in Bulgaria is currently weak, although the Federation of Anarchists in Bulgaria (FAB) is fighting hard to raise awareness of issues, and there are tactical struggles that are rays of light. Amongst these campaigns were the eco-protests of summer 2007 which aimed to preserve the Strandzha mountains as a national park, since the land there was being sold to developers. Despite the High Administrative Court's dismissal of the case, a genuine and popular campaign sprung up in many towns and cities in Bulgaria. Residents protested against the Sofia Council's inactivity over the landfill in the capital's Suhidol quarter, employing peaceful protest to fight for a cleaner living space in the face of disinterest on the authorities' part. But overall, Bulgarians seem reluctant to organise in a de-centralised manner. The hardships of transitional life (as Bulgaria is still in transition) could be a catalyst for activity – or apathy, but so far the

latter has come out on top. From a purely theoretical standpoint, Bulgaria has both currents of anarchist and dictatorial thought that have been evident throughout its history. Georgi Cheitanov is just one of the names that stands out amongst the ranks of Bulgarian anti-state activists. But, without trying to make sweeping statements about the history and culture of Bulgaria, it is a fact that 55 years of the twentieth century were spent under some sort of authoritarian regime, while early governments of post-Liberation Bulgaria were also prone to excesses.

This situation has created a dual attitude to the left as well. It is automatically associated with the communist rule post-1944 which saw the country become the staunchest

Serbian nationalists
gather at Kosovo
Polje

Soviet ally. Nostalgia, so common in the Eastern Bloc, harks back to the state socialism of 'Bai Tosho' (the affectionate nick-name given to the Communist leader Zhivkov) while any attack on that period by the centre and right is seen as an indictment of all left ideas apart from the most watered-down social democracy. The bogey-man of state socialism is exemplary of the binaries that often dominate traditional Bulgarian discourse — either communism or democracy; Europe or Russia; national hero or national traitor. This is a state of affairs that is not given to tactical action. Yet, this gloomy picture may reveal why Ataka rose. There are no absolutes and it cannot be said that this is the 'Bulgarian nature' any more than one can talk

of immutable human nature. The spread of independent media is still not as wide as in the West, but local action can only grow and come out of the post-Communist shadows of derelict trade unions with no power. Until that tipping point in the public mind is reached though, the far right still poses a significant danger to the integrity of all classes and ethnicities in the country, capitalising on simplified 'black or white' politics.

Scapegoating is easier than action. And we know what that has meant in the Balkans...

Postscript

The International of Anarchist Federations (IAF or IFA) was founded during an international anarchist conference in Carrara, Italy, in 1968 by the three existing European federations of France, Italy and Spain as well as the Bulgarian federation in french exile. Things are now much improved. The IAF-IFA has grown in members in the past decades, including the Anarchist Federation (see www.iaf-ifa.org) and will meet in Carrara again this year for its 40th anniversary congress. Plus, the FAB is alive and well in Bulgaria once more, and we are very pleased to announce that they have, in recent months, made contact with autonomous groups in Turkey, which we hope will come to be an antidote to the poison of nationalism described in this article.



MAY 1968

1968 was marked by numerous events—the huge demonstrations throughout Europe and America against the American intervention in Vietnam, unrest in Czechoslovakia, riots in the black ghettos of the USA and student occupations in Britain. What surged to the fore in that fateful year were the events of May–June 1968 in France.

Today, in a period which seems the opposite of 1968, it's hard to realise that a vast movement of struggle, with youth at its forefront, shook the world. But 1968 was prepared for on a number of fronts—counter-cultural as well as political. Beatniks, hippies, drop-outs of all sorts refused the restraints of bourgeois life, and emphasised mutual aid, community life, and sexual liberty. This large counter-cultural movement flourished above all in the United States, but also in northern Europe. By 1968, however, this movement was beginning to run out of steam. Its most politicised form, the Dutch Provos, inspired by a number of anarchists, had attempted to break through apathy on both cultural and political fronts, with some success. But it dissolved itself in May 1967.

Mexico

In the USA the Students for a Democratic Society, coming after the civil rights and disarmament movements, mobilised against the war in Vietnam, both inside and outside the country. Similar movements emerged in Japan with the Zengakuren student



movement, in West Germany with Rudi Dutschke at its head, in France, Italy and Great Britain. There were student movements in countries ruled by the old dictatorships, like Franco's Spain, and in the Third World, like Mexico with very large student demonstrations, leading up to the massacre by the military in Mexico City in September 1968. However, it is too easy to point to a world movement that had inevitable consequences in the events in France. Before May 1968, tiny minorities were engaged in agitation, and these tiny minorities were ignored by practically every political observer

in France. One inquiry published in a book before the events, described young people as completely depoliticised and eager to integrate as quickly as possible into work and 'adult life', which was never questioned. (*The White Book of Youth* by Francois Missoffe) This is not that far off the appearance of young people in France and indeed in Britain today!

Obsolete communism

It was at Nanterre University where the March 22nd Movement formed with libertarian students like Danny Cohn-Bendit and Jean-Pierre Duteuil, as well as the tiny Enrages

Today, in a period, which seems the opposite of 1968, it's hard to realise that a vast movement of struggle, with youth at its forefront, shook the world

group of situationists with Rene Reisel. These groups led off the occupation of the admin block after the arrest of militants of the Vietnam Committees. This agitation came together with that led in the university living quarters against sexual repression and the segregation of young women and young men. It also points to the influence of Anarchism and dissident Marxism through the politics of groups like Socialisme ou Barbarie, the neo-anarchism of the group around the magazine *Noir et Rouge* and the radical ideas of the Situationists. This was directly admitted in the book jointly written by Gabriel Cohn-Bendit and his brother Daniel: *Obsolete Communism—the Left Wing Alternative*. Also of importance were the ideas coming out of the sociology department at Nanterre with Henri Lefebvre, Marxist sociologist and philosopher, close at one time to the Situationists, with his critique of everyday life and “the bureaucratic society of directed consumerism”. This concept was simplified by various spokespeople of the movement as the ‘consumer society’. Lefebvre, Jean Baudrillard, Rene Lorau in the sociology depart-

ment all had their influence on the student movement there.

But the originality of May–June 1968 was down, not to the student revolt, but to the generalisation of struggle, and the entrance onto the scene of the workers, from 15th May. Indeed before that, young workers, in particular blousons noirs, those belonging to street gangs, were joining the students on the barricades. The participation of the workers gave the events an importance far beyond the ferment in Germany and the United States, where workers regarded radical students with little sympathy.

Strike

If the libertarian and situationist students lit the first spark of revolt, it was at Nantes, the day after the great demo at Paris and the occupation of the Sorbonne on the 13th May, where the revolt spread to the workers. The Sud-Aviation Bougenais factory was occupied by the workers, among whom were a number of Trotskyists and anarcho-syndicalists. This movement spread through the region, and across all of France. From the 15th May, a strike

began at Renault-Cleon at Rouen. The industrial workers, followed by those in the public sector, set off a chain of events that spared few sectors of society. So action committees were set up among film-makers, architects, in the high schools and teaching faculties, the banks and offices, each offering a savage analysis of the institutions and where the Sorbonne was the most eloquent example of discussion and debate between different sectors of society.

However, except at Nantes, where students were admitted to meetings of the strike committee, co-ordination between students and workers was difficult. The union bureaucrats, many in the Communist Party, exploited the differences between the ‘adventurism’ of the students and the ‘realism’ of the workers. Many workers perceived students as spoilt children of the bourgeoisie who could reject what they themselves had never had the privilege to experience. But equally there was little sign of revolutionary tendencies among workers to go beyond the limits set by the union bureaucrats. The thousand workplaces occupied and open as forums for free discussions were not seen as ways of moving forward. Soon, the occupations were abandoned by the majority of workers who left only the Communist Party and the union central it controlled, the CGT, running things. As for realism, the bureaucrats fixed a deal of vague promises on retirement payments and conditions and family payouts, and a pay rise that was swiftly wiped out by a galloping rate of inflation. This was in the context of a movement of factory occupations three times that of those in June 1936 which had secured much greater gains in terms of holiday allowances and other concessions.

The anarchists in the May events

May 1968: Demonstrations in the street with tens and hundreds of thousands of participants, millions of workers on strike, pickets in front of occupied factories even in very small towns, the nights of barricades and the attack on the Stock Exchange, the red and the black flags everywhere, the old revolutionary songs which re-emerged, the universities and high schools occupied, the Odeon as a key centre, the old organisations as well as the new like the 22nd March. And the anarchists in all this? They were there of course, leading lights often enough, but the apparent resurgence of the anarchist movement was very ephemeral. Or so it seemed ...

What anarchist movement?

The militants were present in all the struggles but their number was in total very small, and they had different ways of operating.

The Federation Anarchiste of May 68 members were in the demonstrations but it often limited itself to holding conferences and bookstalls at the Sorbonne. On the night of the barricades of 10–11 May, it held its annual gala (benefit concert) at the Mutualite close by, despite the insistence of its activist tendency, inspired by platformism, the Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste, to cancel.

Nanterre

In fact, the majority of the FA made only sporadic appearances, on different struggle fronts, whilst the ORA was in the street with other libertarian communists, those of the Jeunesse Anarchiste Communiste, ex-members of the old Federation Communiste Libertaire, militants of the Union des Groupes Anarchistes Communistes, and the 22nd March



Movement, a unitary body at Nanterre University which had absorbed various pre-existing libertarian groups like *Noir et Rouge*.

Anarchists were present in the occupations of the universities, not only at Nanterre and the Sorbonne, but also at Lille, Rennes, Nantes, Toulouse, Marseilles, Tours, Poitiers, Strasbourg. Not to call for a redefining of teaching or exams, but to call for the coming together of student and workers struggles in a revolutionary perspective. The JAC, notably, condemned all reformist illusions and played a major role in the creation of the CALS (High School Action Committees). In the workplaces, in the strike movements, there were often libertarian communists or anarcho-syndicalists who had an important role. This was the case, not only in western France, at Nantes, Saint-Nazaire, Lorient and Brest, but also at Tours where rail workers and

metalworkers of Schmidt and SKF and textile workers of Indreco were in the forefront; at Auxerre with the CNT, at the Renault plant at Billancourt, at Cleon, Courbevoie, and at Paris among the proof-readers in the printing industry.

The Comites d'action revolutionnaire also sprang up in many places. The CARs gathered together Trotskyists, Maoists, dissidents of the Communist Party, with the principal activists being libertarian communists. This was particularly true at Tours which was in contact with the leading anarchist communist at Nanterre, Jean-Pierre Duteuil, the situationists of Paris and Nantes, with Jussieu University (in the centre of Paris and with a proportionately higher working class intake than elsewhere). It had contacts among the peasants and soldiers. But it was above all among the rail workers that it played a very important role, with a real grip on the lines and stations and with the beginnings of self-organisation of the service.

And the Communist Party?

“Everybody could recognise among those digging up cobble stones and the builders of barriers, baptised barricades, the scum of Bordeaux: pimps, thieves and wanted criminals, commandos of ex-paratroopers, fascists of every sort.” (Gironde Federation of the Communist Party, May 1968)

“We were told ‘but these are revolutionary militants’. In truth, they had nothing to do with the revolutionary movement. This isn’t the first time that unscrupulous agitators have concealed their infamies under the noble flag of the revolution. The fascists have also always pretended to be revolutionaries.” (Georges Marchais, Communist Party leader).



The Russian constructivists and anarchism

London is currently host to an exhibition of the works of Rodchenko, Russian artist associated with the Constructivist movement. The exhibition reveals Rodchenko's relationship with the Bolshevik regime but fails to dive beneath the surface of official Soviet truth and the origins and ideas of the Constructivists.

The leading theorist of Constructivism was Alexei Gan who published his book *Constructivism* in 1922. The book is noted for its innovative typographical design. Gan makes no bones about being rooted in Marxist theory and refers throughout to "the proletariat with its sound Marxist materialism". This does not stop his savage attacks on the ideas of the Bolshevik Party's cultural commissions, the Commissariat of Popular education (Narkompros). He accuses Narkompros as being hardly distinguishable from non-Communists in their veneration for old concepts of art: "Their words promise the future whilst they reverently transmit and popularise the past". This 'more Communist than thou' stance is more easily understandable if we dig a little deeper and realize that the groundings of Gan's ideas lie, not with Bolshevism, but with anarchism.

Gan had become a leading light in the Moscow avant-garde in the 1920s. This avant-garde had radical views on art and architecture. Before the First World War there was very little in Russian architecture that could be called innovative as compared with what came after.

After the February Revolution a Trade Union of Architects had formed. By the time of the end of the civil war and the introduction by Lenin of the New Economic Policy, this had collapsed and the old establishment Moscow Architectural



Rodchenko's artwork for the film *Battleship Potemkin*

Society (MAO) was refounded and set itself up in its old building. Shchusev became its President. Whilst well meaning in its outlook, it failed to break with the professionalism of the past.

Mansion occupations

In 1917, with the flight of many politicians and functionaries of the old regime, both Bolsheviks and anarchists occupied their large mansions and began using them as headquarters. Anarchism was particularly strong in Moscow with a following among the industrial working class. In fact, most estimates of their numbers point to them being three times as numerous as Bolshevik Party membership. Anarchists began publishing papers and Moscow saw the appearance in September 1917 of a "weekly public affairs and literary newspaper of the anarchist persuasion" called *Anarkhiia* (Anarchy).

With the revolutionary events of October *Anarkhiia* ceased publication

for a short period only to re-appear as a daily and arguing strongly against the concessions that the Bolsheviks had given with their signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty. It pledged to paralyse the governmental mechanism, seeing the socialist State as much an enemy as its capitalist predecessor. The second issue of this daily contained a piece by Gan on "The revolution and popular theatre".

By the fifteenth issue there was a regular section on the back page devoted to culture and headed *Tvorchestvo*, meaning 'creative work'. This covered literature, theatre and art and was edited by Gan. *Anarkhiia* had a daily print run of 20,000 and was able to widely broadcast the ideas of avant-garde painters and artists. Among those who wrote for it were artists associated with constructivism—Rodchenko, Tatlin, Altman, and Punin whilst Malevich was to be the most regular contributor.

The 6th April issue had an im-

portant article by Malevich "Architecture as a slap in the face to reinforced concrete". He called for a reincarnation of Moscow architecture that would "allow the young body to flex its muscles". It attacked architecture of that present period as "the only art with the warts of the past still growing endlessly on its face" and the "sick, naïve imaginations" and "lack of talent and poverty of creative powers of the individualist architects". He criticized the new structure of the Kazan station whose architect was Shchusev, the President of MAO.

The anarchists expropriated 25 Moscow mansions and set up local HQs there. The Merchants' Club became the main HQ of the Moscow Federation of Anarchist Groups and the address for *Anarkhiia*. The daily described the occupied buildings and their contents. The Merchants' Club became the House of Anarchy. It ran an intensive cultural programme which included 'circles of proletarian art-printing, poetry and theatre'. Gan himself was superintendent of a take-over of one of the largest mansions, the house owned by the multi-millionaire Morozov. Gan described its contents in *Anarkhiia* and later on came the announcement that the mansion would be turned into a museum with Gan as chief curator.

Rodchenko, Tatlin and Malevich's connections with the anarchist movement are obscure. Later memoirs by Rodchenko are obviously cagey on his connections with the movement, either through his own caution or family editing. On the other hand the articles that these artists wrote for *Anarkhiia* are imbued with anarchist ideas and Catherine Cooke (see below) has suggested that Malevich's great work *Black Square*

may be alluding to the anarchist black flag.

Bolshevik propaganda

In March and early April 1918 the Bolsheviks began a propaganda campaign against the anarchists in Moscow, affrighted by opposition to the Brest-Litovsk treaty, and the growing support for anarchism. *Anarkhiia* countered these accusations, which blamed anarchists for every act of vandalism or disorder in Moscow. Trotsky then began a week-long series of talks to Red Guard troops at the Kremlin, where he viciously attacked anarchism and whipped the soldiers into an anti-anarchist fury. These troops, under the control of the Bolshevik secret police corps, the Cheka, then launched an early morning attack on the anarchist houses on 12th April, involving an artillery bombardment. Forty anarchists were left dead or wounded, and five hundred were arrested and kept in

'abominable conditions and treated in the most insulting manner', according to an editor of the other Moscow anarchist paper *Golos Truda*, who was among those arrested. We do not know if Gan was among those arrested. *Anarkhiia* was temporarily shut down.

In the following years as the Bolsheviks tightened their grip on power, those artists like Gan and Malevich who had aligned themselves with anarchism had to adopt a public posture of support for the regime and were accommodated as semi-official or official spokespersons for the regime on cultural matters. Gan later perished in a prison camp in 1940. The Soviet regime buried this lost history, which is only now being re-discovered.

Alexei Gan (bottom left), and Rodchenko and Stepanova

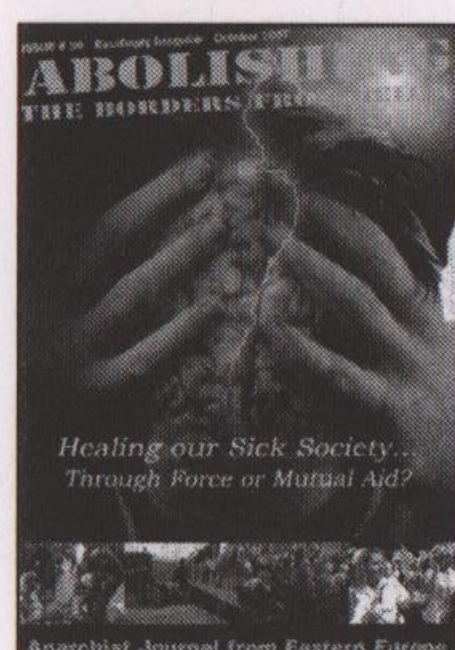
This article is based on the following article: Sources of a radical mission in the early Soviet profession. Alexei Gan and the Moscow Anarchists, by Catherine Cooke, published in *Architecture and revolution: contemporary perspectives on Central and Eastern Europe*, Routledge, 1999.



Abolishing the borders from below

Anarchist journal

Abolishing the Borders from Below is an English-language magazine about six years old based in Berlin, covering anarchist struggles in Eastern Europe and ex-Soviet Union. It has traditionally come out bi-monthly, although as of issue #30 the editors have decided to become 'excitingly irregular'. Far from it being the case that there isn't the people power or the material to predict when an issue will be ready, however, they have decided to publish as and when the material is plentiful enough and as soon as there is time to devote to it. This is beautifully free spirited! There is certainly no evidence that material is thin on the ground, as #30 is 82 sides long and all of it worth reading. As well as carrying what you might expect (lots on anti-fascism, anti-militarism, anti-borders), the articles submitted, commissioned and translated reveal an extremely diverse movement. In addition, some issues are themed; for example Patriarchy (#23, February 2006), Discrimination (#25, July 2006), Education (#27, December 2006), Labour, (#29, May 2007), Mental Health (#30, October 2007).



protest is not always appropriate. Holding demonstrations that are not given prior clearance by the police or failing to carry identification can very likely lead to arrest and land you in prison. Bosses of our energy companies would be unlikely to organise with neo-nazis to break up an anti-nuclear camp by murdering and injuring sleeping protesters, for example, as happened last year in Angarsk, Siberia. Neither do we tend to get arrested and framed for planting bombs on trains to discredit our movement, as happened to anarchists in St. Petersburg, who were already facing heavy repression in the wake of anti-globalisation protests. Both these incidents, reported in ABB #30, October 2007, touched the AF deeply because we have contacts with the anarchists affected. They are acutely aware that we face nothing like this and ask that as well as more obvious passive forms of solidarity such as raising money for bail, solicitors (and, sadly, hospital fees and funerals) we can publicly address what is happening to them and the repressive context in which they are working, so that 'the whole world is watching'. The message is, don't just read in ABB about what is happening to comrades working in contexts ever bit as repressive as in the era of state-communism; act on it!

Different experiences

It isn't just the case that the state is more brutal and task of the eastern comrades simply more dangerous. We can only understand the global manifestation of the state if we do it subjectively, that is to say through other comrade's experience. Reading ABB it is impossible to avoid noticing just how different some manifestations of political life are there, reminding us that our

task as internationalists is not just to 'support' each other but to learn about the variety of ways reactionary forces and ideas are organised.

For example, Anarchists are organising in Bulgaria against a recently formed National Militia, a militarised wing of the Bulgarian National Union (Ataka – see article in this issue). The militia is openly recruiting in the BNU's sportclubs and aims to defend 'Bulgarians' against natural disasters as well as civil disorder. This quasi-fascist militia is technically illegal in Bulgarian law, and is indeed being investigated by the government (#30). But whilst the state contemplates this affront to its own 'legitimate' authority, Roma people, the militia's real target, are left to defend themselves in ways that alienate them from mainstream 'Bulgarian' society. In the Czech Republic (Czechia), Slovenia and other places the Roma are also placed in a slightly different situation from some minorities in western Europe, seen as an anti-social ethnic from enemy 'within', rather than 'from abroad' (#23).

This has required some very sensitive treatment indeed from ABB editors because of what, some contributors seem to be arguing, is a genuine clash of cultures and not just about racists in the majority trying to force the minority to conform (#27). The editors are aware that the line they are expected to take is something like 'if Roma are anti-social it is because society is anti-Roma' but try to go beyond this and exploring why anarchists in more that one country are coming to a 'politically-incorrect' analysis. It doesn't quite work, and requires the commissioning of an article that would be important to anti-racists everywhere, not awkward editorial

acknowledgements that things seem to be a bit different with the Roma question.

Anti-fascist and secular

Even anti-fascist work itself, by far the biggest and most documented activity in the magazine, has a slightly different emphasis. It is a much bigger problem in terms of the sheer scale of fascist organisation. Racial attacks and murders carried explicitly by Nazis are commonplace. Furthermore, the 'left' are seen as part of the 'right', in that some of the most reactionary activity is undertaken by nationalists nostalgic for a different kind of authoritarianism. This is something Antifa has to confront, like in the Czech Republic where they are having to resist infiltration by Bolsheviks (#23).

Another difference is that, having emerged from decades of state-enforced atheism, the undermining of religious belief doesn't necessarily feel quite as progressive or liberatory to ordinary people in ex-Communist countries. Anarchists work with a secular materialist agenda, nonetheless, criticising state promotion of Catholic dogma in schools and targeting the latest of some 300 memorials to Pope John Paul in Poland (#23 & #30). Likewise, in countries where the combination of universal suffrage and free, 'democratic' elections is only relatively recent, it is as important to them as it is here to smash the myth of freedom through the ballot box (#30).

Food Not Bombs

Even Food Not bombs means something different in countries where this might be the only form of support for people without homes or money. It's not just a case of showing that ordinary people

are responsible for making sure everyone has something to eat and that we shouldn't rely on the state and the church. It might be the only food some people get. In Serbia, for example, the church has lost interest in this sort of charity work, according to the FNB 'Subwar Collective' in Belgrade. Two issues of ABB (#22 & #23) have reflected on the appropriateness of this anarchist 'charity', and concluded that it is important work "towards a free anarchist society where sharing the food doesn't need to take a character of political action but being completely common daily practice of everyone for everyone" (#23 p. 44).

In the workplace

Workplace struggles sometimes take place in a different context too. In Russia, for example, most unions are closely wedded to the state struc-

Anti-fascists confronting a neo-nazi in Wrocław, Poland



turally, not just ideologically like here. Fighting to set up or defend a politically independent union is an act of serious defiance, as discovered by Syndicalist Alexandr Kolovanov in Irkutsk, Siberia in 2005, when he was arrested and threatened with charges of terrorism for giving out leaflets in his workplace (#23).

ABB is sometimes better on action, issues and tactics than on analysis, perhaps taking too much for granted, given its audience, that we understand the theoretical and historical processes that have formed movements in ex-Soviet-bloc countries. Sometimes this is a real problem. An article on labour struggles in Poland (#23) contains no anarchist analysis and appears to be actually pro-Solidarity, as though anarchists are like reformists and nationalists in considering that this particular trades union was the liberator of the Polish people under Communism. This clearly doesn't totally represent Polish anarchist attitudes, because there was discussion of the issue of reformist unions in Warsaw in April 2007 (#29), even though we are not told what the dissenters said, and the same issues contains an interview with Polish 'Workers Initiative' (IP) that recently transformed itself from an anarchist workers network into a Syndicalist union.

In spite of the fact that there are few articles that are over-arching in a theoretical sense, there is often important reflection on the state of the anarchist movement itself. In Czechia one writer thinks it is too punky/subcultural to grow or even survive (#23), whilst another (#29) thinks it can't reach ordinary people because it has rejected its own cultural base, anarcho-punk, too strongly and relies on an assumed, artificial and archaic image, as such

Abolishing the borders from below

... continued

alienating both punks and workers! The Czech anarchist resurgence five or so years back produced a federation that joined our own International, but it has since collapsed. Following such discussions in ABB will be really valuable for the AF/IFA and others in understanding what happened.

Anything new in eastern Europe

will be reflected in Abolishing the Borders because its profile in the East is very high. It is an obvious early port of call for all new initiatives. How else would we have known of the formation of PunaMust (Red & Black) group in Estonia in 2006 almost as soon as it happened and but even have its Aims and Principles to read in

English (#27)? With contributions from 205 separate contacts listed in 20 countries, we hope 'exciting irregularity' might mean more issues a year rather than fewer!

Abolishing the Border from Below is distributed in Britain by Active Distribution, www.activedistribution.org and the ABB website is: abb.hardcore.it

Black Flag magazine—No. 226

It's been a year and some since the last issue of *Black Flag* was out and about. This issue made it just in time for last year's Anarchist Book Fair and it has certainly been worth the wait. It's sporting an attractive new layout thanks to Rob from Freedom Press and, with a new collective, things are looking up.

So what can we expect from this edition? Well there is the usual in depth analysis and comment of subjects both contemporary and historical. This particular issue has a good look at some anarchists from the near and distant past. Thought provoking articles about revolutions and of course a present day cover story from an anarchist view point.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy's (Sarko, as he is popularly known) electoral threats against workers made interesting reading. It remains to be seen whether Sarko can 'do a Thatcher.' This is very useful material for those interested in French politics.

The historical article 'A failed revolution?' is one I enjoyed the most. It succinctly sums up the events leading to, during and after the French popular front of 1936–38. It's detailed in its portrayal

of various factors leading up to what could have been a 'dual power' situation. Of particular interest to readers of *Organise!* is the role played by anarchists in the factory occupations and strikes. Their success and failure can be summed up in the quote:

The anarchists were able to set up factory committees running independently of the state, however these committees were dropped for fear that the organisation would become 'diverted into workplace affairs'

The year 2006 marked the passing away of American Libertarian Socialist Murray Bookchin. The one time Communist Party member, Trotskyist and anarchist's legacy is given fair coverage. Alongside his obituary is his eloquent critique of the Communist Manifesto.

"More dangerous than a thousand rioters" is what the Chicago Police department described Lucy Parsons as. This review of her writings and speeches succeeds in showing her phenomenal organisational skills.

As mentioned previously, this issue is packed with past anarchists. No history is with out a look at Solidarity's Chris Pallis (1926–2005), a.k.a Maurice Brinton. Again



as with Bookchin, there is publication of his insightful and comical take on sects. Readers familiar with the recent Scientology demos will take to his style instantly.

Self-taught academic Abel Paz's book *Durruti in the*

Spanish Revolution is skillfully covered, which the life and times of Durruti portrayed over six engrossing pages – a must read.

The final obituary in this issue is that of John Taylor Caldwell (1911–2007). Self-educated, the Glaswegian's stamina and contribution to British anarchism is invaluable.

Last but not least is the first of a two part analysis of how the Russian revolution lost its way. As a former Trot, reading through this at times felt like a bad trip! Centralisation certainly empowers the few, not the many.

The reviewed issue was no. 226 and no. 227 is expected in May. It is £3.00 per issue and copies can be obtained by writing to: *Black Flag*, BM Hurricane, London, WC1N 3XX Email: black_flag@lycos.co.uk

Beer and revolution: the German anarchist movement in New York City, 1880–1914

by Tom Goyens (University of Illinois Press)

"To use Lefebvre's argument, anarchists did not simply occupy space; they consciously produced it by appropriating places for themselves and inscribing them with meaning that reflected their ideology and identity ... German anarchists derived much of their political identity from what some have called 'geographies of resistance': back rooms of saloons or even elaborate picnics in secluded areas of the city's parks. The spatiality of anarchism, its geopolitical realm, is therefore crucial to understanding the history of the movement because it adds a spatial dimension to an otherwise exclusively temporal examination". From Introduction, p.7.

German-speaking anarchists—Austrians and Germans—were among the first to develop a movement in the United States, rooted in New York, Brooklyn, Newark, Paterson, and the surrounding smaller towns.

Anarchism had started taking off in Germany in the late 1870s, with the revulsion of many rank and file members of the Social-Democratic Party towards their leaders and parliamentarians who seemed to them to offer no resistance to the suppression of socialism by Chancellor Bismarck.

Bismarck passed the Anti-Socialist law in 1878. This stipulated that "Persons who constitute a danger to the public safety or other can be refused residence in the district or town". Some of the 800 who were exiled in this period immigrated to the USA, whilst a much larger number made the move without the imminent threat of exile. Some of these would become anarchists in America.

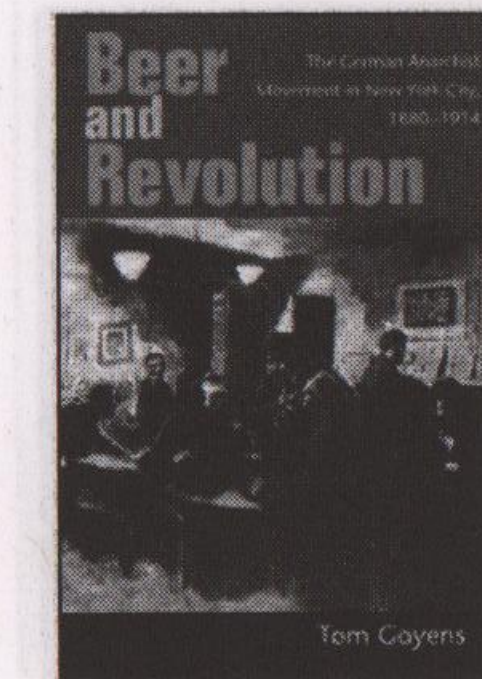
The leading pioneers of this movement, Wilhelm Hasselmann and Johann Most, are dwelt on in this book as well as an important and long-term character in the movement,

one Justus Schwab. His father had fought in the 1848 Revolution. He himself had emigrated to New York in 1869. He had taken an active part in the workers' movement in New York and had opened a saloon on the Lower East Side. The anarchist Emma Goldman described him as a "champion of freedom, sponsor of labor's cause, pleader for joy in life". This imposing man with broad shoulders and blond curly hair had been an important figure among the revolutionaries now organising outside the Socialist Labor Party, with his saloon as a base for this grouping. Schwab's saloon was to continue to be a regular meeting place for anarchists till the end of the 19th century.

The importance of our own social space and its revolutionary implications should not be under-emphasised.

As well as dealing in detail with the differences within this anarchist movement, between those who called themselves anarchist collectivists and those who called themselves anarchist-communists, with those who favoured organising in the workplace and those who shunned it, Goyens deals at length with the "radical geography" of the movement.

The alternative space created by the German anarchists included the saloons and the lecture halls as well as propaganda groups, discussion circles, lecture evenings and book clubs, drama groups, choirs and



other musical groups, free schools as well as large picnics, fundraisers and street demonstrations and rallies. As Goyens says the culture of this movement served two purposes: "On the one hand, it served the anarchists' need for a separate, ideologically fulfilling sphere of action in which they could nurture an anarchist lifestyle, and on the other hand, it was designed to critique—and occasionally oppose—mainstream capitalist society".

The network of anarchist clubs was invigorated by the itinerant speechmakers, and as the anarchist Bruno Reinsdorf was to state: "the living word penetrates to the heart more than the dead letter".

The experiments in social space that was undertaken by the German-American anarchists should be remembered when we attempt to construct a culture of resistance in this country and in this time. The importance of our own social space and its revolutionary implications should not be under-emphasised. German anarchists created a political bohemia in New York long before the days of Greenwich Village, a bohemia that was working-class, radical and meaningful.

The larger than life figure of Johann Most casts a long shadow over the pages of this book. But finally one recalls the cosy shelter of the back room at Schwab's saloon, "a Mecca for French Communards, Spanish and Italian refugees, Russian politicals, and German socialists and anarchists" (Emma Goldman) where one became as much intoxicated by the heady mixture of humour, art, and politics, music and debate as by the glasses of lager beer. When Schwab died in 1900 nearly 2,000 people, many in tears, followed his hearse down Second Avenue.

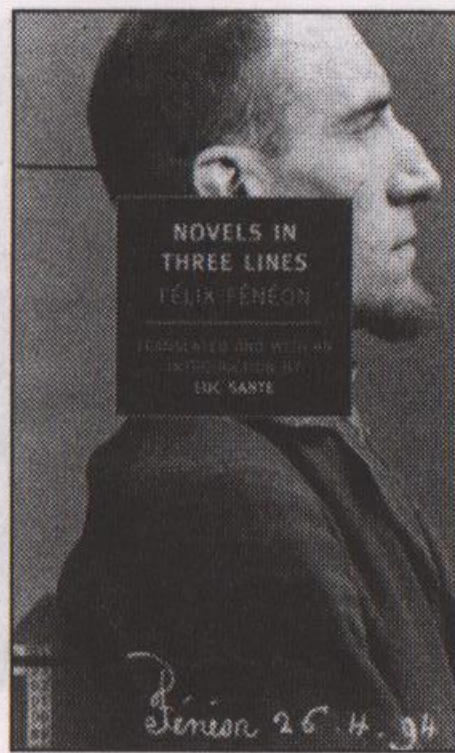
Novels in three lines

by Félix Fénéon (New York Review Books Classics)

The remarkable figure of Félix Fénéon, the first French publisher of James Joyce and the 'discoverer' of the artist Seurat, is little known outside of France. NYRB have corrected this with the publication of this book. The translator Luc Sante provides an introduction which puts Fénéon squarely into the context of anarchist politics at the end of the 19th century.

Fénéon, a dandyish look-alike for the rangy figure of Uncle Sam, complete with goatee, was born in 1861, the son of a traveling salesman. He got employment as a clerk in the War Office in Paris and remained there for 13 years. During this time he started developing as a man of letters, founding three different journals. He wrote reviews of books and art exhibitions and started frequenting the famous Tuesday evenings at the apartment of Stephane Mallarmé, the great Symbolist poet. Like Mallarmé, Fénéon was much influenced by anarchism and whilst the poet never actively involved himself in the movement, Fénéon did.

He began writing for the anarchist papers *Le Pere Peinard*, edited by Emile Pouget, the advocate of direct action and sabotage and for *L'Endehors*, an anarchist magazine aimed at the literary and artistic vanguard and edited by the no less remarkable character Zo d'Axa (real name Alphonse Galland). Pouget's paper was meant to appeal to the working class and was written almost entirely in argot, working class slang. When Zo was forced to go to London to escape a charge of sedition in 1892, Fénéon took over the editorship of his paper. The 1890s were the 'heroic' period



of French anarchism with the counter-attacks by lone anarchists or small anarchist groups against the repression unleashed by the French government. These attacks usually took the form of bomb attacks on various targets like the homes of judges. In the aftermath, Fénéon was one of those rounded up (both front and back covers of this book are illustrated by police mug-shots of our Félix). There followed a show trial, the Trial of the Thirty, in which Fénéon distinguished himself by his dry humour and sarcasm. One day the judge received a package in court, which when opened, proved to be filled with human shit. Fénéon remarked in a stage whisper that: "Not since Pontius Pilate has a judge washed his hands so ostentatiously". Fénéon and the others were acquitted, due to lack of any evidence. However Fénéon lost his job. Fortunately he soon got a job of the cultural paper *Le Revue Blanche*. Félix had his finger on the cultural pulse and was able to publish Proust, Apollinaire, Jarry and many others, many of them at the very beginning of their artistic careers. Debussy was the music critic.

When the magazine folded, Félix had to earn a crust by working as a journalist. He ended up writing copy for the liberal daily *Le Matin*. Here he was put in charge of the *faits-divers* column, where he collated news items from wire-services, small-town newspapers and direct information from readers. Influenced as he was by Mallarmé, he was able to apply as Sante says, "compression, distillation, and skeletal evocation ..." into a series of three-liners which he continued to write until November of 1906. Here are some examples:

Mme Fournier, M. Vouin, M. Septeuil, of Suci, Tripleval, Septeuil, hanged themselves: neurasthenia, cancer, unemployment.

Women suckling their infants argued the workers' cause to the director of the streetcar lines in Toulon. He was unmoved.

During a scuffle in Grenoble, three demonstrators were arrested by the brigades, who were hissed by the crowd.

The crafted and clockwork precision as Sante says: "testify to the growing importance and menace of the automobile, the medieval conditions that still prevailed in agriculture and country life, the often fortunate inefficiency of firearms, the vulnerability of rural populations to epidemic disease, the unflagging pomposity of the military establishment, the mutual suspicion and profound lack of understanding between the French and their colonial subjects, the increasing number of strikes and the unchangingly brutal state of factory labor, the continuing panic over the threat of anarchist bombs." These three-liners, at once shocking and humorous, are an important event in modernism coming between the precision of Mallarmé and what was to come with Picasso, Braque and the Dadaists.

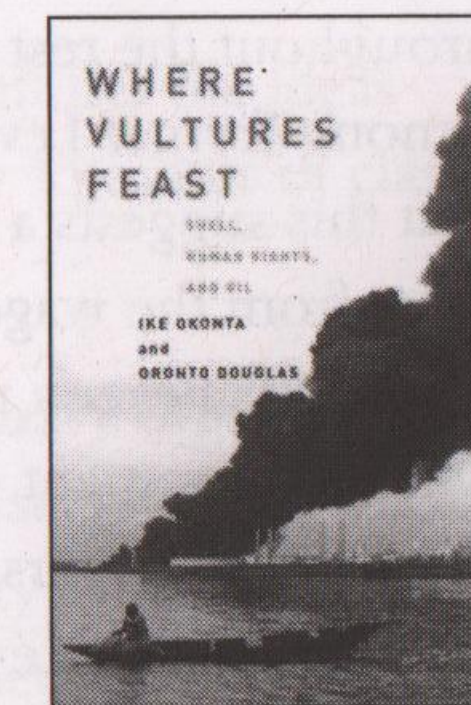
The book is humorously illustrated by designs of the time, including great woodcuts and sketches by the gifted anarchist illustrators Valloton and Steinlen. One in particular, *L'Anarchiste*, by Valloton, showing a lone anarchist on the street surrounded by thuggish policemen, with two top-hatted bourgeois lurking in the background, is particularly striking.

Where vultures feast

by Ike Okonta and Orono Douglas

There are few who dispute the adverse effect of capitalism upon the environment. While outright denial may be rare, the defence of environmental destruction is more common, the list of excuses ranging from the preservation of profit margins for shareholders and executives; lax ecological laws that encourage corporate investment in a particular nation's resources and not those of its neighbours; the resulting economic benefit that the people of that nation (rarely) experience; and the fact that such destruction is inevitable – if one corporation makes an effort to preserve the environment, another will destroy it anyway. Such normalisation of environmental destruction is increasingly being challenged by local people, environmental justice groups and intergovernmental organisations; in some areas at least, corporations are making tentative steps towards 'greener' behaviour. There has been a tendency for such isolated action to take place in 'developed' nations, while the global South still submits to the multinationals who plough whole ecosystems out of the ground and send both the resources and profits back 'up North'.

Ike Okonta and Orono Douglas' relentless, scathing account of Royal Dutch Shell's forty-year ecological siege in the delta of the river Niger is the perfect report with which to counter the apologists of international capital who define the actions listed above as positive examples of the 'social responsibility' trend. *Where Vultures Feast* is a chronology of the continuous violence waged upon the ecosystem of the delta, beginning with the colonial palm oil industry during the Scramble for Africa of the late nineteenth century. Oil was discovered in 1956 and the people of the delta have seen their land ravaged by both the Anglo-Dutch corporation and various Nigerian military governments. Shell has employed seismic testing for oil, laid pipelines across farmland, dumped tonnes of oil in rivers and lakes and created private armies to protect 'their' oil in order to pump it out of Nigeria, making billions of dollars in the process, while the people who inhabit the delta remain amongst the vast number of poverty-stricken Africans cramped at the bottom of the global food chain. Alongside the endless list of ecological disasters that are directly attributable to Shell, the Nigerian government has brutally suppressed



any opposition to the company's presence, deploying armed troops, sometimes paid by Shell themselves, to crack down on protesters such as the Biafran independence movement of the 1960s and Ken Saro-Wiwa's MOSOP in the 1990s. Saro-Wiwa's farcical trial, in which he was sentenced to be hanged by a judicial court, included testimonies from two witnesses who Shell had paid to paint Saro-Wiwa as a terrorist. Okonta and Douglas may not possess the most dynamic or exciting writing style, the book repeats many facts and statements on numerous occasions, but the message of *Where Vultures Feast* is so powerful and shocking that readers will be repeating passages and incidents from the book to friends and colleagues for months after finishing it. Ultimately, the shameful legacy of a company that has held millions of people and millions of acres of previously pristine ecosystem hostage for almost half a century will have an enormous impact on any person who has been bombarded by the advertisements and press releases that portray oil companies as environmentally-friendly corporations whose primary desire is to protect and preserve whatever lies in their path.



Past Tense continue their commendable series of cheap pamphlets on British radical history. We review two of them below.

A glorious liberty: the ideas of the Ranters by A.L. Morton

The Ranters formed the extreme left of the sects which emerged during the English Revolution and Civil War. Most contemporary writing about them was hostile and often the worst sort of gutter journalism. However Morton is able to assume that their strength lay in poorer areas of London as well as throughout the rest of England and that they also had sympathy among former Levellers inside and outside the Army. He believes that this suggests a movement mainly of the towns, with support from the wage earners and artisans rather than the peasants. It was never a real threat to the rulers. Rather, he feels, it presents a movement of political defeat after the setback of the efforts of the Diggers and Levellers. Their beliefs entailed waiting for God the Great Leveller who would come upon the rich like a thief in the night, with the practical outcome that the poor might as well enjoy themselves as much as possible in the waiting period by eating, drinking and being merry. As such, this was a welcome reaction to the grim Calvinism of the Puritans and Cromwell, but could lead nowhere. In some of the writings of the Ranters who produced pamphlets can sometimes be found as Morton says, a “deep concern for the poor, a denunciation of the rich and a primitive biblical communism that is more menacing and urban than that of Winstanley and the Diggers”.

A few footnotes by Past Tense criticize the official Communist Party line that Morton had. However it would perhaps have been better if Past Tense had offered fuller criticisms of Morton's outlook in an introduction of their own.

Symond Newell and Kett's Rebellion: Norfolk's great revolt against enclosures, 1549 by Peter E. Newell

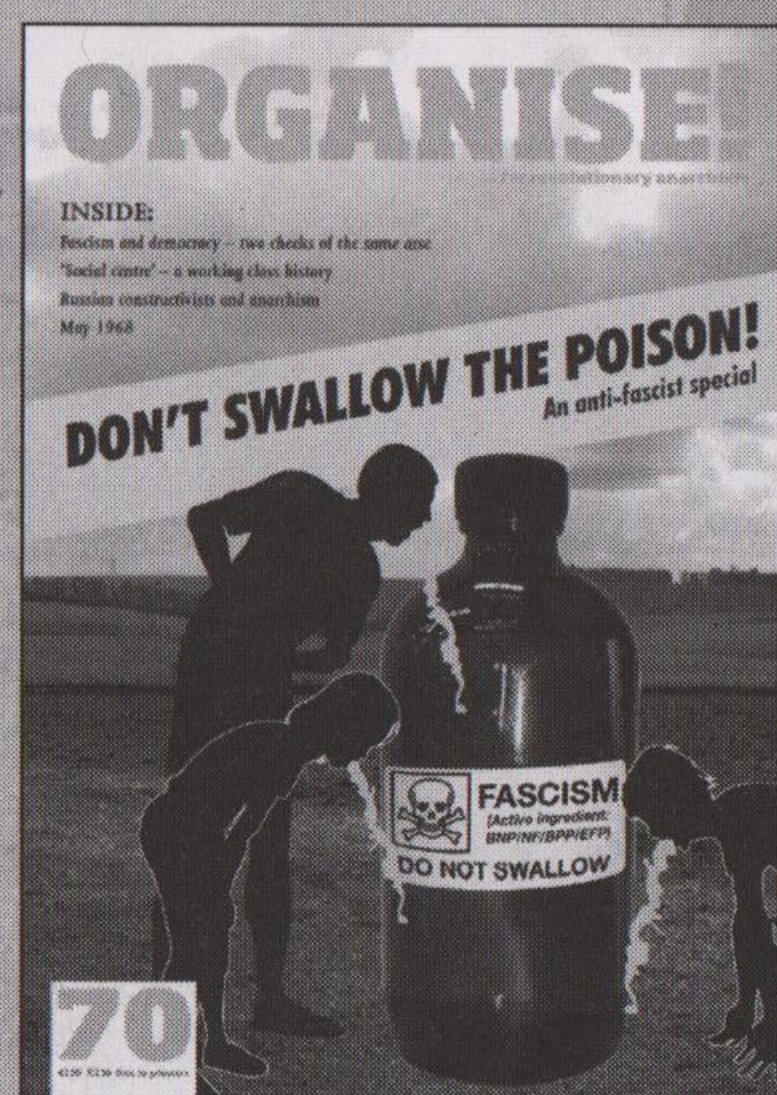
This reviewer remembers Peter from the days of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists and the Anarchist Workers Association in the 1970s. Whilst he returned to the Socialist Party of Great Britain years ago, Peter still maintains, in my opinion, the libertarian outlook he has always had. Here he traces the history of his ancestor Symond Newell. Kett's Rebellion in 1549 in Norfolk involved thousands of yeomen and labourers revolting against the landlords and demanded an end to the enclosure of commons land that was beginning. The uprising, after some initial victories, ended in a slaughter of 3,000 peasants at Dussindale. In the murderous aftermath, 360 more were hanged, including Robert and William Kett. It is unclear whether Newell met the same fate, or escaped retribution.

Despite this, and because of the fear of future risings, the rate of the progress of enclosures slowed down considerably in Norfolk. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries marked the change from feudalism to capitalism and the periodic revolts that broke out showed the enduring resistance to rulers and their evolving methods of exploitation.

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